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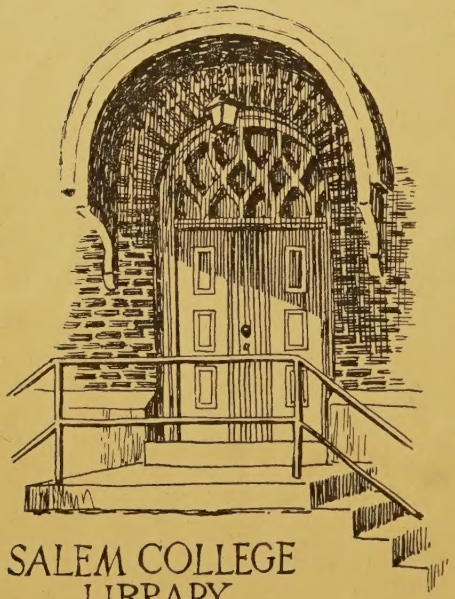

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A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

From the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoyevsky (1881)

BY PRINCE D. S. MIRSKY

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To

JANE ELLEN HARRISON

17847

PREFACE

This book is planned so as to lead up to and form one whole with *Contemporary Russian Literature* (1881–1925). But, covering as it does a much larger stretch of time and only a slightly greater number of pages, the present volume is on a somewhat less detailed scale than its companion.

It is continued to a date which may be regarded as the end of the "classical" age of the Russian novel and which coincides with the death of Dostoyevsky and Turgenev and the conversion of Tolstoy. No hard and fast divisions being possible in the complex fabric of history, the dividing line between the two volumes is not in all points strictly chronological. Some writers who produced much of their best work before 1880, but are not typical of the age, have been included in *Contemporary Russian Literature*. This is the case with Leskov, Leontiev, and Sluchevsky. Tolstoy has been cut in two between the two books. In a few cases there is a slight overlapping.

In writing of the literature of a country whose history is very little known abroad I was all the time under the temptation of enlarging on general historical and cultural topics. But for fear of making the book too hideously long (and, as it is, I had too little time at my disposal to make it as short as I should have liked to) I have cut out all this general information. I am forced to presume a certain general knowledge of the history of Russian civilization on the part of my readers, a presumption all the more justifiable as the same publishers have recently brought out an excellent general history of Russia by Sir Bernard Pares.

The same considerations of space (as well as of my own insufficient knowledge) have prevented me from including chapters on Russian folk-lore, a subject vast enough to make

any size of book by itself; and on Ukrainian literature, which, though in many ways strikingly different, is closely linked with that of the Great-Russians.

Some passages of the paragraphs on Avvakum, on Griboyedov, and on Lermontov originally appeared in prefaces to English translations of their works. They are here reproduced with the kind permission of the proprietors of the Hogarth Press (Avvakum) and of the editors of the *Slavonic Review* (Griboyedov and Lermontov). I owe my thanks to Professor Pares for permission to quote an unpublished translation by him of a fable of Krylov.

D. S. Mirsky.

London
June 1926.

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TRANSLITERATION

	Used in the present book	Other symbols used in English	in French	In German	Used by specialists in France and Germany (based on Czech spelling).
а	a	—	—	—	a
б	b	—	—	—	b
в	v	—	ff (final)	w	v
г	g	—	gu (before i, e,)	—	g
д	d	—	—	—	d
е	e	—	ie, ïe	je	e
ж	zh	—	j	sh	ž
з	z	—	—	s	z
и, і	i	—	—	—	i
й	y	i*	i, ï	j	j
к	k	—	—	—	k
л	l	—	—	—	l
м	m	—	—	—	m
н	n	—	—	—	n
о	o	—	—	—	o
п	p	—	—	—	p
р	r	—	—	—	r
с	s	ss (intervocalic)	ss (do.)	ss	s
т	t	—	—	—	t
у	u	ou	ou	u	u
ф	f	—	—	—	f
х	kh	h	kh, h	ch	ch
ц	ts	tz	tz	z	c
ч	ch	tch	tch	tsch	č
ш	sh	—	ch	sch	š
щ	shch	—	chtch	schtsch	šč
ъ	(omitted)	—	—	—	—

ы	y	ui,* i, ï	y, i	y, i	y
ь	’	(omitted)	do.	do.	’
э	e	—	—	—	e
ѣ	e	ye*	e, ie	e, je	ě
ю	yu	—	iou	ju, iu	ju
я	ya	—	ia	ja, ia	ja
ѳ	th	—	—	—	—

This system has been used with complete consistency only in the transliteration of Russian words and titles of books. In the names of persons and places I have departed from it in the following cases:

1) е, ѣ initial or after vowel — ye (Yelets)
2) endings ій, ый — y (Dostoevsky, Bely)
3) groups: ье, ьѣ — ie (e. g. Grigoriev)
ьи — yi (e. g. Ilyin)
ья — ia
ью — iu
4) ь in other cases omitted — (e. g. Gorky, not Gor’ki)

The system of transliteration adopted makes no difference between the old spelling (still used by the majority of printers outside USSR) and the new one, introduced in 1917.

Names of foreign origin, immediately recognizable as such, are given in the spelling of the language of their origin. The correct transliterated form is given in brackets and in the index. The accent, which is of vital importance in Russian, is marked where the full name and date of the writer is given, and also in the index. The index also includes all such alternative spellings as present a real difficulty of identification (e. g. *Tchekhov* for *Chekhov*, but not *Tolstoi* for *Tolstoy*).

All dates are in the “old style,” which is eleven days behind the new in the eighteenth century, and twelve days behind in the nineteenth.

Familiar Christian names when the difference between the English and the Russian forms is not great are given in the English form (thus Theodore, Peter, Nicholas, but Vasili, Ivan, Avvakum for Basil, John, Habakkuk).

* British Museum.

A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE LITERATURE OF OLD RUSSIA

(*Eleventh-Seventeenth centuries*)

1. THE LITERARY LANGUAGE

FROM its beginning in the eleventh century to the end of the seventeenth Russian literature lived entirely out of touch with the contemporary developments of Latin Christendom. Like Russian art it was a branch of the Greek trunk. Its germs were brought late in the tenth century from Constantinople, together with the Orthodox faith. As it was the practice of the Eastern Church to favour the translation of the Scriptures and liturgies into the vernacular of the newly converted nations—the clergy of these nations were under no necessity of learning Greek; and the absence of Greek scholarship in Russia had for its necessary consequence the absence of all acquaintance with secular Greek literature, and complete ignorance of the pre-Christian classical tradition.

The literary language of Old Russia is known as Old Church Slavonic, or simply Slavonic. It is based on a Bulgarian dialect of the neighbourhood of Salonika and was elevated to the rank of a liturgic and literary language in the ninth century by the apostles of Slavdom, SS. Cyril and Methodius. It was used, besides the Russians, by the South Slavs and by the Roumanians. As it was used almost exclusively for translations from the Greek, it was easily saturated with Greek influence. The innumerable abstract words of Greek were faithfully and skilfully given a Slavonic form, and Greek methods of syntactic subordination were reproduced in the new medium. From the very beginning Church Slavonic was a more or less artificial language, largely created *ad hoc* for a translation from a foreign and much more highly developed tongue, and for this reason

very different from what we may imagine the spoken language to have been. In the course of time this artificiality increased, and while the spoken languages (in Russia as well as in the Balkans) underwent, between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, rapid and radical changes, Church Slavonic remained stationary, and even tended to approach still closer to its Greek prototype. In the fourteenth century especially, Serbian and Bulgarian clerks carried through a thorough-going revision of all existing versions of the Scriptures and liturgies with the purpose of making the Slavonic text more literally adequate to the Greek. This form of Church Slavonic became the literary language of Muscovite Russia.

Though the only literary, Church Slavonic was not the only written language. The administrative offices of the Russian princes and communes evolved a more vernacular form of speech. In the various parts of Russia it took various forms, keeping close to the spoken language. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the language of the Muscovite chancelleries became the official language of the Empire. It is as different as possible from the literary language of the same time. It is free from Church Slavonic and Greek elements. Its syntax is the simplest imaginable, incapable of subordination, and based on strings of *and*'s and *but*'s. Its vocabulary is rich, but technical and concrete. It is expressive and often picturesque, but it was obviously incapable of displacing Greek-bred Slavonic. It was not used for literary purposes. As for the literary language, the vernacular element insinuated itself into it only in the measure of the illiteracy of the writers, or of their inability to find Slavonic moulds for the expression of their stronger feelings. Russian (as opposed to Slavonic) was first consciously used for literary purposes in the third quarter of the seventeenth century in the writings of a great and original man of genius—the Archpriest Avvakum.

2. LITERARY CONDITIONS

Authorship was not one of the recognized activities of Old Russia. There were no "writers," but only "bookmen" (*knizh-*

niki). The "reading of books" (*knizhnoye pochitanie*) was a respectable and edifying occupation, but new literary works were written only when some practical necessity called for them. The humanistic tradition of Greece, so lively in Constantinople, was not transmitted to Russia, and traces of the acquaintance of Russian clerics with even the names of the ancients are negligible. Imaginative literature formed an insignificant part of the reading of the Old Russians. When he wanted to read, the Russian bookman turned to the holy books, and other collections of edifying matter. If he wanted philosophy, he had the Wisdom books of the Bible, and Chrysostom; if he wanted poetry, he had the Psalms; if he wanted stories, he had the lives of the saints. There was no need for fresh literary invention.

As in the mediæval West, the copying of books was regarded as a work agreeable to God, and was, especially in pre-Muscovite times, carried on mainly by monks. Printing was introduced into Russia very late. The first book printed on Russian territory (in Moscow) appeared in 1564. Even after the establishment of the printing-press the cost of printing was so great and the printers so few that only books of the greatest importance (Bibles, liturgies, statutes, and official instructions) could be printed. Till about the middle of the eighteenth century there were more manuscripts than printed books in circulation. It was only in the reign of Catherine II that mediæval conditions ceased to prevail in the Russian book-market.

Judged exclusively by its literature, Old Russian civilization cannot fail to produce an impression of poverty. But it would be wrong to regard literature as its principal expression. The very nature of this civilization, traditional and ritual, reduced literary originality to very little. The real expression of the artistic and creative genius of Old Russia is to be found in its architecture and in its painting, and those who want to gauge its true value must turn to the history of Russian art rather than to that of literature. These considerations must be constantly present to the reader of the present chapter.

3. SURVEY OF TRANSLATED WORKS

The principal and most permanent part of the verbal impressions of the Old Russian came from the liturgies. It was by attending the services at church rather than by reading at home that his mind became saturated with the intellectual food of Orthodox Christianity. The liturgies of the Eastern Church are full of the most sublime and elevated poetry—the poetry of the Psalms, and of the Greek hymnologists. The Greek hymns, which are metrical in their original form, were translated into a beautiful prose, which is devoid of all metrical construction, but carefully adapted to the music to which they were sung. Though the South Slavs appear to have made some attempts (in the ninth and tenth centuries) at imitating Greek prosody, no part of the Slavonic liturgy was ever couched in verse. The original hymnology of the Orthodox Slavs is negligible.

The books of the Bible were known chiefly in their liturgic form—that is to say, in editions arranged according to the order of lessons. The Psalms were the most familiar of all books to the Old Russian reader. They were the first book he learnt to read and the one to which he most frequently recurred in subsequent life for edification or pleasure. He usually knew it by heart from end to end. Of the other books of the Old Testament the favourites were those which presented a philosophy of life agreeable to the taste of the Old Russian bookman—Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Sirach. As the Psalms were his treasure-house of poetry, so were these his mine of wisdom. Copies of the Prophets and of the Apocalypse were usually accompanied by the commentary of the Greek Fathers. The historical books of the Old Testament were little read. Expositions of the Old Testament story known as *Paleya* (Greek παλαιὰ) were the ordinary sources of the Old Russian's knowledge of biblical history.

The books of the Slavonic Bible were copied out and circulated separately, and Russia had no complete codex of the Bible until in 1499 Gennadios, Archbishop of Novgorod, or-

dered the first complete copy of the Russian-Slavonic Bible to be made. The first Bible printed in Russia was that of Ostrog (1581), and the first complete edition to appear in Moscow was that of 1663. The final "Authorized Version" of the Russian-Slavonic Bible appeared almost a century later, in 1751.

Next to the liturgies and the Bible, the Fathers were the most authoritative books. They were also copied with great care, and interpolations and abridgments in their text were avoided. The most widely read was St. Chrysostom. He was the great moral teacher and the great exemplar of eloquence. The highest theological authority was St. John Damascene.

The lives of saints were extensively read. Some were the works of reputed and highly authoritative authors, and these were copied with particular care and exactitude. One of these was the story of Barlaam and Josaphat, ascribed to St. John Damascene. This Byzantine version of the life of the Buddha deeply impressed itself on the Russian religious mind. The form in which the lives of saints were most frequently read was that of calendars or menologia (in Russian, *minei*) where the lives of the several saints were arranged under the dates of their respective feasts. Authoritative and official *minei* were compiled in the sixteenth century by Macarius, Metropolitan of Moscow, and under Peter the Great by St. Demetrius, Metropolitan of Rostov. But by the side of these official collections there were others of a more popular and arbitrary composition, which were more widely read. Such above all was the *Prologue*, a vast collection of the most varied religious readings for every day. It had numerous redactions and contained lives of saints, pious anecdotes, and readings from the Fathers. Its contents varied, and, by the side of a prevailing majority of translations from the Greek, many of its entries were of native origin. It was widely read and highly esteemed, but did not receive the official sanction of the Church. Some of the matter included in it no doubt verges on the apocryphal. After the great schism of the seventeenth century it began to be looked at askance by the Church. But it remained in favour with the Old Believers and has come down to us in numerous

manuscripts. In recent times the *Prologue* has attracted considerable literary attention, and modern writers, like Tolstoy, Leskov, and Remizov, have retold many of the stories contained in it.

The *Prologue* is half-way between canonical and apocryphal literature, and so is the *Paleya*, which includes in its biblical history much that is not contained in the Bible. Numerous apocryphas, many of them of very early Christian origin, formed a vast mass of Old Russian literature. Those that were not at variance with Orthodoxy were countenanced by the Church, and at times of low learning hardly distinguished from books of canonical authority. The most widely popular were those which dealt with future life. One of them impressed itself with particular force on the Russian imagination. This is the legend of the Virgin's visit to hell: moved by the endless suffering of the damned, she implores God to be allowed to share it, and finally obtains from Him that all the damned be henceforth given once a year a respite from their torments, for fifty days, from Easter to Whitsunday. Another apocrypha of exceptional interest is the *Appeal of Adam in Hell to Lazarus*, but this has such substantial claims to originality that it will be best discussed in a section dealing with original literature.

The books whence the Old Russians drew their secular scientific information were not the residue of the scientific achievement of the ancients preserved by the cultured Byzantines. The sounder part of the ideas of the Old Russians on nature came from the Fathers that had written on the creation. The secular books they had were those current among the lower cultural strata of Byzantine Greece—such as the cosmography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, and the Physiologus.

Of Byzantine historians, again, the more classical and "highbrow," as for instance Procopius, remained unknown in Russia, and Russian bookmen drew their historical information from the more "popular" chronicles, such as those of John Malalas and George Hamartolos. These chronicles presented the history of the world, beginning with the story of the Old and New Testaments, followed by the fall of Jerusalem and the

persecutions of the primitive Church; they enumerated the early Cæsars, and continued by giving a more or less detailed history of the Byzantine emperors.

The only author to be known in Old Russia that may be termed a classic was Josephus. Apart from epitomes of his works in various compilations there exists a very early Russian-Slavonic version of the *De Bello Judaico*. It seems to have been made in Russia towards 1100. For the intelligent freedom with which it follows the text it is unique among Slavonic translations. It seems to have been very popular among the higher intellectuals of the twelfth century, and traces of the influence of its diction in the description of battle-scenes are evident in *The Campaign of Igor*. But the Russian Josephus is interesting not only for its important part in Russian literature. It represents a version of the famous history which is unknown in any other language. It contains six passages on Christ and Pilate that are not to be found in the extant Greek manuscripts, and which appear to be very early Christian interpolations (first–second centuries). Other passages, expressive of strongly anti-Roman feeling, have even been explained as going back to an original version by Josephus himself, which he changed afterwards to suit the taste of his patrons.

In Byzantine and mediæval literature in general it is not quite easy to distinguish between history and fiction. It is the fashion to-day, for instance, to include the mediæval stories of Troy and Alexander in the department of fiction, but to the Old Russian scribe they were history and he inserted them in his historical compilations. Neither of these stories received any romantic development on Russian soil, for the subject of romantic love was quite alien to the Old Russians. The same is even more evident in the Russian version of the Byzantine epic of *Digenis Akritas* (in Russian, *Devgeniy*). The original (which, it may be added, was discovered later than the Russian adaptation) contains an appreciable element of romance, but this element is entirely eliminated in the Russian version. It is needless to add that the political verse of *Digenis* is turned into ordinary Slavonic prose.

Another kind of imported fiction was stories of wisdom, consisting of dialogues, of parables, and apologues, or turning on the solution of riddles. Most of these stories were ultimately of Indian or Arabic origin, but all came to Russia *via* Greece. They seem to have been imitated in Russia, for, if we may trust negative evidence, one of them (*The Merchant Basarga*) has no Greek original. But its intrinsic originality is insignificant.

4. THE KIEVIAN PERIOD

From the tenth century to the invasion of the Tartars in the middle of the thirteenth the political and cultural centre of Russia was Kiev. The civilization of the period was dominated by two classes: the urban clergy and the military aristocracy. The former was largely recruited from the latter. The clergy, especially the higher monastic clergy, were the principal depositories of culture, and the art and literature of the time are mainly religious. The military class, headed by a numerous and warlike race of princes, submitted to the authority of the Church and were Christians in their moral ideals. But they retained traditions of heathen times and loved war, the chase, and the pleasures of the table, above all things. They produced the only work of the period that is in the true sense of the word a literary masterpiece, the prose-poem of *The Campaign of Igor.*

The most strictly Byzantine department of Kievian literature are the writings of the higher clergy. As early as between 1040 and 1050 a piece of Russian oratory was produced which is quite comparable to the highest rhetorical achievement of contemporary Greece. This is the *Oration of Law and Grace,* ascribed (conjecturally, but on very strong grounds) to Ilarion, Metropolitan of Kiev, the first Russian to occupy that seat. It is a piece of subtle theological eloquence on the subject of the opposition of the New and the Old Testament, followed by an elaborate panegyric upon St. Vladimir. The same kind of ornate and subtle rhetoric was cultivated in the second half of the twelfth century by Cyril, Bishop of Turov,

by whom nine orations are extant. Both Ilarion and Cyril display a great command of language and expression. They are fully versed in the art of balancing their phrase and constructing their paragraph, and are at home in the whole Byzantine arsenal of trope, simile, and allusion. The sermons of Ilarion and Cyril could find evidently but a small public, and the common run of Kievian preachers used a far simpler style. They offered moral precepts in a form accessible to the average church-goer. Such, for instance, are the extant sermons of St. Theodosius, Abbot of Pechersky, one of the founders of Russian monasticism.

The Pechersky (i. e. Catacomb) Monastery of Kiev, founded in the middle of the eleventh century, was for two centuries the nursery garden of Russian abbots and bishops, and the centre of all ecclesiastical learning. It was the first home of Russian hagiography. Nestor (*c.* 1080), a monk of this monastery, was the first notable Russian hagiologist. He wrote the lives of the martyred Princes Boris and Gleb and of St. Theodosius. They possess considerable merits. The Life of St. Theodosius, especially in the part relating to the early years of the holy abbot, gives a more intimate and familiar idea of the everyday life of Kievian Russia than any other literary work of the period.

Towards the end of the present period Simon, Bishop of Suzdal (1214–26), began the compilation of a complete collection of lives of the Pechersky saints. It formed the nucleus of the *Pechersky Paterik*, which, extensively added to in following centuries, became one of the most popular hagiographical writings in the language.

Another Russian monk who has left a name in the history of literature is the Abbot Daniel, who in 1106–8 went to the Holy Land and described his journey in a famous *Pilgrimage*. It is written in a simple, matter-of-fact, but by no means dry or tedious, style. It is especially remarkable for the great exactness and reliability of its account of the Holy Land under the first Frankish king. It is one of the most valuable mediæval books on the subject. It is also interesting for the patri-

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otic feeling that animates it: in every holy place he visited Daniel never omitted to pray for the Russian princes and all the land of Russia.

Ecclesiastical learning was not confined to the clerics, and two remarkable works produced by laymen are full of reflections of clerical knowledge. One of these is the Testament of Vladimir Monomakh (Great Prince of Kiev in 1113–1125). He was the most popular and universally respected prince of the whole period, and was remarkable above all for the high sense of public duty that inspired his life-work. His Testament was written shortly before his death. He relates in it his active life, full of wars against the nomads and punitive expeditions against seditious princes, of conferences, of distant voyages and of big-game hunting. His tone is full of dignity and of the consciousness of his own achievement, but at the same time free from all pride or vanity. It is humble in a truly Christian sense. The French historian Rambaud has called him "a Slavonic Marcus Aurelius," but this is hardly a happy comparison. There is nothing of the Roman Emperor's stoical sadness in the Russian King, whose main characteristics are a simple piety, an honest sense of duty, and lucid common sense.

Very different is the other secular sermon that has come down to us—the *Supplication of Daniel the Exile* (*Zatochnik*). It was written probably early in the thirteenth century in the province of Suzdal. It takes the form of a petition of the disinherited son of a good serving-family to his prince that he may accept him into his service. It is primarily a show-off of reading, and consists mainly of quotations from the gnomic books of the Bible, from oriental wisdom tales, and from other sources, including popular proverbs, all welded together with elaborate rhetoric. The Supplication was copied and interpolated, and finally became a sort of commonplace-book, so that its original form of a petition to the prince became entirely obliterated. It is interesting as a representative work, and for the light it throws both on the literary taste of the average literate Old Russian, and on the kind of wisdom he appreciated.

5. THE CHRONICLES

The largest, and (with the exception of *The Campaign of Igor*) the most valuable, original and interesting monument of Kievian literature are the Annals or Chronicles (in Russian, *Letopisi*). Russian annal writing began about the same time as Russian literature, and its uninterrupted tradition was continued far into the seventeenth, in the case of Siberia even into the eighteenth, century. The Annals were the work partly of monks, partly of lay bookmen, in Muscovite times of official scribes. Like by far the greater part of Old Russian literature they are anonymous and have come down to us not in their original and individual forms, but as parts of large *codices*, which vary greatly from manuscript to manuscript, and in which the compiler's work has obliterated all external sign of the original constituent parts. The Annals of the Kievian period are contained chiefly in two compilations, which in one form or another appear at the head of most later *codices*. These are the so-called Primitive Chronicle (*Nachal 'naya Letopis'*), covering the period from "the beginning of Russia," to 1116, and the so-called Kievian Chronicle, covering the period from 1116 to 1200. The Primitive Chronicle in certain late manuscripts is ascribed to St. Nestor, monk of Pechersky, and author of the Lives of Boris and Gleb and of St. Theodosius. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was regarded as his individual work, but since then it has become apparent that it has no real unity and that its final form was given to it by Sylvester, Abbot of Vydubitsky. Russian scholarship has expended much work and great critical acumen on the analysis of the Primitive Chronicle, but, although its component parts can now be pretty clearly distinguished, the original dates and still more the authorship of the earlier of them are a matter of the widest conjecture.

The Primitive Chronicle begins with a genealogy of the Slavs "from the generation of Japhet." This is followed by an account of the early history of the Slavs, of their divisions and manners, which is strangely "nineteenth century" in its Panslavist sentiment and its ethnographical interest. Then fol-

lows the well-known story of the "invitation of the Varangians" to Novgorod, which is curiously similar to that of Hengist and Horsa, and is now usually regarded as a purely ætiological concoction of some learned clerk of the eleventh century. The account of events of the later ninth and of the tenth centuries is based on a fairly solid chronological skeleton, but the strictly annalistic entries are very few. They are enlivened by numerous vivid and spirited traditional tales, which form the chief attraction of this part of the Chronicle. The earliest is entered under 882 and they continue as far as the early years of Yaroslav (1019–1054). They are obviously founded on oral tradition, but there is no ground to believe that this tradition was poetical. They are just anecdotes, of the same kind as the anecdotes that are the chief charm of Herodotus. One of the Russian annalist's anecdotes is even identical with one of the tales of the father of history (the story of the siege of Belgorod by the Pechenegs and the story of the siege of Miletos by the Lydians). I will quote, as an example of these stories, one of the best known (Pushkin has since made it the subject of a famous ballad). It refers to the death of Oleg, the founder of the Kievian monarchy, and is entered under the year 915.

Oleg questioned sorcerers and soothsayers: "From what shall I die?" And a soothsayer said to him: "Prince! the horse thou lovest and ridest, from him wilt thou die." And Oleg, taking heed of this, said: "Never will I mount this horse, nor see him, again." And he ordered the horse to be brought before him and then led away and stabled, and he lived several years without seeing the horse, even till his campaign against the Greeks. And having returned to Kiev, he lived there for four years. In the fifth year he remembered about his horse from which the soothsayers had predicted he should die. And he called his master of the horse, saying: "Where is my horse, which I ordered to keep and to tend?" And the other one said: "He is dead." And Oleg laughed, and mocked the soothsayer, saying: "It is not true what the soothsayers say, but all lies: my horse is dead and I am alive." And he called for a horse: "that I may see his bones." And coming to the place where lay his bare bones and skull, he dismounted, and

mockingly said: "So this is the skull I am to die from," and he put his foot on the skull; and a serpent crawled out of it and bit him in the foot, and, falling ill, he died.

By the side of stories of this kind the early Chronicle contains also more connected and generalized passages, such as the account of the wars of the great adventurer Prince Svyatoslav, part of which is closely paraphrased by Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall.* The account of the reign of Vladimir includes the remarkable story of how that prince examined the various religions before deciding to adopt Christianity from the Greeks. He rejected Islam on the grounds that "It is the Russians' joy to drink; we cannot do without it." He finally chose Orthodoxy, under the impression of the account given him by his envoys of the beauty and splendour of the service at St. Sophia of Constantinople, a motive which throws an important light on the Old Russian's essentially ritualistic and æsthetic conception of his religion.

The part of the Chronicle subsequent to *c.* 1040 appears to have been mainly the work of a monk of Pechersky, perhaps of Nestor. The spirit of this later part of the Chronicle is deeply religious. The chronicler regards all events as the direct action of Providence. He takes a keen interest in portents and omens, and regards all the woes of Russia as a punishment for the wicked conduct of the princes: the second half of the eleventh century was one incessant civil war between the sons and grandsons of Yaroslav. The Annalist exhorts the princes to forget their feuds, and to turn their attention to the defence of the steppe marches against the steadily advancing nomads. He is particularly partial to Vladimir Monomakh, who alone of all Russian princes answered to his ideal of a patriotic prince. The others were slaves of greed and military ambition. Inserted in this part of the Chronicle, under the year 1096, is a narrative of exceptional merit, the work apparently of a cleric of the name of Vasili. It is the story of the blinding of Vasilko, Prince of Terebovl (in Galicia), by his cousin and neighbour David of Volynia, and of the events that followed it. The story is told in greater detail than the

rest of the Chronicle, and is a masterpiece of simple and direct narrative. For its straightforward and comprehensively human manner it may almost be compared with the stories of the book of Genesis.

The Kievian Chronicle of the twelfth century has been less carefully disintegrated than its predecessor, but it is an equally composite document. The most valuable part is the account of the years 1146–54, dealing with the struggle of Prince Izyaslav II (grandson of Monomakh) for the throne of Kiev. It is remarkable both as the broadest and truest representation of the life of the military aristocracy of South Russia, and as a piece of vivid narrative. It is evidently by a soldier, one of Prince Izyaslav's "companions." It is full of the spirit of military prowess. The ambition of the princes and their desire to win honour in the field is the main motive of their actions. The narrative is lucid, leisurely, detailed, straightforward; the style ample and free from rhetorical devices. It is altogether the masterpiece of Kievian historical literature, and can rank with the best examples of mediæval history.

After the decline of Kiev the Annals were continued both in the north and in the south-west, in the Kingdom of Galicia, which flourished in the second half of the thirteenth century, and which has an honourable place in literary history owing to its single extant production—the so-called Volynian Chronicle.

This Chronicle is different from other Russian chronicles in that its form is not a succession of isolated entries under every year, but a connected account of causes and effects. It is pretty difficult reading, and not infrequently obscure. The characters speak almost invariably in proverbs and aphorisms; the literary influence of the Old Testament (Kings, and Isaiah) is clearly apparent; the descriptions are full of vivid and hyperbolic imagery. Though not devoid of considerable ecclesiastical culture, the spirit of the story is purely secular and military. The story is carried on till 1290. After that date the south-west of Russia becomes silent for several centuries.

6. THE CAMPAIGN OF IGOR, AND ITS FAMILY

Slovo o Pŭlku Igorevē or *The Word of the Campaign of Igor* was discovered in 1795 by an enlightened nobleman, Count A. I. Musin-Pushkin, in a manuscript *codex*, written in a sixteenth-century hand, which contained nothing but secular matter, including a version of *Digenis Akritas*. A copy was made of it for Catherine II, and a first edition published in 1800. The original manuscript was destroyed in the fire of Moscow in 1812, so that the *editio princeps* and the copy made for Catherine are now our only authority for the text. They were made at a time when Russian palæography was in its youth, and contain numerous corrupt passages, which we do not know whether to attribute to the destroyed manuscript or to its decipherers.

The *Slovo* was discovered at a time when the Ossianic question occupied all minds. The admirers and defenders of the poem immediately compared it to Ossian, while its detractors affirmed that it was as much a forgery as "Ossian" himself. Scepticism, however, was soon silenced, chiefly by the discovery of a verbatim quotation from the *Slovo* in a dated manuscript of 1307, and of an early fifteenth-century prose-poem on the battle of Kulikovo, which was nothing but a rather unintelligent paraphrase of *The Campaign of Igor*.

From the first the work stood out as a startlingly isolated phenomenon, unrelated to anything of its age. One quite obvious thing was that it had been composed very soon after the events described, probably within the same year, and that its account of the campaign was substantially historical, for it squared most exactly with the account in the Kievian Chronicle, without there being any trace of verbal coincidence between the two documents. The problem of the *Slovo* cannot yet be regarded as finally settled and there is still considerable variety of opinion on many points. But the available internal and external evidence seems to be best interpreted in the following way.

There existed in Kievian times a secular oral poetry, the

preservers of which were singers belonging to the upper military class of the prince's companions, and similar to, but less professional than the Norse scalds. This poetry flourished in the eleventh century; some of the poems were still remembered in the end of the twelfth. They were associated with the name of a great singer, Bayan, whose songs are quoted by the author of the *Slovo*. But it is not clear that at the time of the composition of the *Slovo* this oral poetry was still alive. *The Campaign of Igor* itself is a purely literary work, *written*, and not sung. Its title *Slovo* (which, however, may be an addition of a later scribe) is the translation of the Greek *logos*, and like *logos* means originally *word*, and secondly "discourse, sermon, oration"; it was used to describe a great variety of literary works of not strictly narrative character. On the other hand the *Slovo* speaks of itself as a *song*. The author, though anonymous, has a powerful individuality. He was a layman, probably the companion of some prince. He was steeped in books and in oral tradition. The great originality of his work was that he used the methods of oral poetry in a work of written literature. There is no reason to believe that he had had any literary predecessors in this manner of writing. But he has also roots in the literary tradition. The similarity of some turns of phrases and expressions with the Russian Josephus (v. *supra*) is very striking, and there are more distant associations with the style of the ecclesiastical orators, and with that of the Annals. The rhythmical structure of the poem is not that of verse. Russian scholars have spent great pains in trying to reduce it to a metrical pattern, but they have not succeeded in arriving at a satisfactory solution. They have always been guided by the preconceived idea that a work of such great poetic beauty must be in verse and have overlooked the existence of such a thing as highly organized rhythmical prose. The rhythm of prose is different in *kind* to the rhythm of verse, for it lacks the essential element of the latter—*the line*. It must be remembered that the parts of the Slavonic liturgy that are sung are nevertheless couched in prose, and that consequently even if the *Campaign of Igor* was actually a song (which is very unlikely) it need not necessarily

have been in verse. A rhythmical analysis of the *Slovo* reveals (as a first impression suggests) that it possesses a very real and efficient rhythm, but a rhythm far more flexible, varied, and complex than that of any metrical pattern. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that in this respect it is a thing *sui generis:* no rhythmical prose I know of in any language can so much as approach it for infinitely varied flexibility.

It is not only the nature of its rhythmical prose that makes *The Campaign of Igor* a work unique of its kind. It is altogether difficult to classify. It is neither a lyric, nor an epic, nor a piece of political oratory, and it is all these blended into one. Its skeleton is narrative. It relates the story of the unfortunate campaign of Prince Igor against the Polovtsi, his initial success, his subsequent defeat, and his captivity. This constitutes what may be regarded as the first part of the poem (the term poem, though inexact, is after all the nearest description of what the work really is). This is followed by a long lyrical or oratorical digression. The Great Prince of Kiev is first described dreaming a dream of ill omen, symbolic of Igor's disaster. Then the poet apostrophizes, one after the other, the several Great Princes of the land of Russia, ranging over the whole country, from Suzdal to Galicia, and exhorting them to intervene and save Igor. Then Igor's wife is introduced, lamenting on the walls of her town of Putivl—this passage forming one of the most beautiful summits of the poem. After a rapid and abrupt transition the third part begins—the account of Igor's escape from captivity. Like that of his advance and disaster it closely agrees in fact, but differs strikingly in style, from the account of the same events in the Chronicle.

The text of the poem is corrupt, but the obscure passages (though certainly hopelessly obscure) are not numerous and do not really interfere in any serious way with the enjoyment of the ordinary reader.

The spirit of the *Slovo* is a blend of the warrior spirit of the military aristocracy as reflected in the Chronicle of 1146–1154, with a wider patriotic outlook, that is more akin to that of Monomakh and of the patriotic clerics and which

regards self-sacrifice for Russia as the noblest of virtues. It is also distinctly secular in spirit. Christianity appears only incidentally and rather as an element of contemporary life than as part of the poet's inner world. On the other hand reminiscences of an older nature-worship are part of the most intimate texture of the poem.

The style of the poem is the reverse of the primitive and barbaric. It is curiously, disconcertingly modern, all suggestion and allusion, full of splendid imagery, subtly symbolic and complex. Professor Hrushewsky, one of the latest critics of the poem, rightly remarks that only now, after a prolonged education in the school of modern poetry, are we really able to feel and understand the poetical methods of the *Slovo*. It is far too modern for anyone to have been able to forge it in 1795.

Nature symbolism and nature parallelism play a large part in the poem. The movements of men have their "correspondences" in the movements of the "vegetable universe." This feature has been adduced as proof of the kinship of the *Slovo* to "popular poetry." A vague kinship there certainly may be, but no similarity of detail with later Great-Russian or Ukrainian folk-song. Besides, a nature parallelism of a very similar kind was a time-honoured form of expression in Byzantine sacred oratory.

The Campaign of Igor, alone of all Old Russian literature, has become a national classic, which is familiar to every educated Russian, and often known by heart by lovers of poetry. The quality of its poetry is entirely different from the quality of the poetry of the Classical Age of Pushkin, but it cannot be regarded as inferior. If Pushkin is Russia's greatest classical poet, the author of the *Slovo* is the greatest master of ornate, romantic, and symbolical poetry. His work is a continuous succession of purple patches, the least of which has no counterpart in modern Russian poetry. The nineteenth century, especially its later, degenerate half, with characteristic lack of taste produced numerous modernizations of the poem, which, preserving the skeleton, destroyed its rhythm and its flavour. Needless to say, these modernizations seem to-day

far less modern than the original. Modern poets who are imbued with its symbolic reminiscences have not dared to imitate its methods.

The language of the *Slovo* is, of course, antiquated and unintelligible to an absolutely uncultured Russian. It is, with minor peculiarities, the usual Russo-Slavonic literary language of the twelfth century. But the modern Russian reader needs very little preparation to be able to understand it, especially if he has read his Slavonic Bible, and understands his Slavonic prayers (achievements which, unfortunately, are becoming rarer, and will probably be very rare in the next generation).

To give an, inevitably very inadequate, idea of the poem I will venture to present English translations of four extracts from it.

The first is from the beginning. The author after at first having rejected the idea of imitating Bayan, is after all attracted by the older poet's example, and begins inventing appropriate beginnings for his poem in the manner of Bayan:

It is not a storm driving falcons across the wide plains—it is flocks of daws hastening towards the great Don. Or thus again mightst thou have begun thy song, Bayan, grandson of [the God] Veles: "Horses neigh beyond the Sulà; fame rings in Kiev; trumpets sound in Novgorod; banners stand in Putivl—Igor awaits his dear brother Vsevolod. And the Fierce Wild-bull Vsevolod spoke to him: "My only brother, my only bright light art thou, Igor, for we are both sons of Svyatoslav! Saddle thy gallant steeds, brother, for mine are ready, saddled in front of Kursk; and my men of Kursk are noted warriors; they were swaddled to the sound of trumpets, nursed beneath helmets, fed at the spear's point. The ways are known to them, the ravines are familiar to them, their bows are strung, their quivers are open, their swords are whetted, and they gallop across the steppe like grey wolves—seeking honour for themselves, and for their Prince—glory." Then Igor stepped into his golden stirrup, and rode out into the open field. The sun bars his way with darkness; groaning with thunder, Night has silenced the birds; the wild beasts raise their howling; Div cries from the top of a tree, he bids hearken lands unknown, the Volga, the sea border, and the Sulà country, and Soldaia, and Chersonesos, and thee, O Idol of Tmutarakan. And the Polovtsi on unbeaten

tracks fled to the great Don; carts creak at midnight like swans let loose. Igor leads his host towards the Don. . . . [a corrupt passage] . . . Wolves howl in the ravines conjuring a storm; eagles shriek calling the beasts to a feast of bones; foxes yelp at the scarlet shields. O Russian land, thou art [disappeared] beyond the hill. Long does the night last, but the dawn breaks; mist covers the fields; nightingales stop their singing; daws raise their chatter. The Russians have barred the great plains with their scarlet shields, seeking honour for themselves, and for their Prince—glory.

The following passage describes the defeat of Igor. It begins with an evocation of the civil wars of the eleventh century:

In those days seldom did one hear the cry of the ploughman, but often the croaking of the ravens, as they divided corpses between them; and daws chattered their language, getting ready to fly to their feasts. So was it in those days and in those wars, but such a battle has never been heard of. From morning till evening, and from evening till dawn the arrows cease not flying; swords thunder against helmets; steel spears break to splinters in the unknown field, in the land of the Polovtsi. The black earth under the hoofs was sown with bones and watered with blood—and it came up a harvest of sorrow in the land of Russia.

What is this noise? What is this ringing I hear, early before the break of dawn? It is Igor turning his battle line: for he has compassion for his dear brother Vsevolod. They fought one day; they fought the next; at noon of the third day fell the banners of Igor. Then it was the two brothers parted on the bank of the swift Kayala. Then was there not enough of blood-red wine. Then did the brave Russians end their revel. They had served the wedding guests their fill of wine, and now it was their turn to be laid down for the land of Russia. The grass bows low with pity, and the tree in sorrow bends to the ground.

In the next extract Igor's wife, Yaroslavna (i. e. the daughter of Yaroslav) is described lamenting her husband:

Yaroslavna's voice is heard on the Danube; like some unknown cuckoo she cries early in the morning.

"I will fly," she says, "like a cuckoo along the Danube. I will dip my beaver sleeve in the Kayala river. I will wipe the Prince's bloody wounds on his stricken body."

Yaroslavna, early in the morning, laments on the ramparts of Putivl, saying: "O Wind! Wind! Why, sir, dost thou blow so hard? Why dost thou carry the Khan's arrows on thy light wings against my love's warriors? Is it not enough for thee to blow, up above, beneath the clouds, rocking ships on the blue sea? Why, sir, hast thou scattered my joy over the grass of the steppe?"

Yaroslavna, early in the morning, laments on the ramparts of Putivl, saying: "O Dniepr Slovutich! Thou hast broken through stony mountains through the land of the Polovtsi; thou hast rocked the ships of Svyatoslav on their way to meet Kobyak! Carry, O sir, my love back to me, that I may no more send my tears to him early in the morning."

Yaroslavna, early in the morning, laments on the ramparts of Putivl: "Bright and thrice-bright Sun! Thou art warm and fair to all! Why didst thou smite my love's men with thy burning rays? In the waterless steppe thou hast strained their bows with thirst, and choked their quivers with despair."

This is followed, without transition, by the escape of Igor from captivity:

The sea spurted at midnight. Waterspouts move like clouds of darkness. God shows Prince Igor the way out of the land of the Polovtsi, to the land of Russia, to the golden throne of his fathers.

The light of evening has gone out. Igor sleeps; Igor wakes; Igor measures the plains in his mind from the great Don to the little Donets. Vlur whistled from across the river—calling on the Prince to take heed. The earth throbbed; the grass rustled; the tents of the Polovtsi began to stir. But Igor, the Prince, sped like an ermine in the rushes, and like a white mew across the water. He jumped on his gallant steed, and jumped off, like a barefooted wolf, and ran towards the meadows of the Donets, and flew like a falcon beneath the mists, slaughtering geese and swans for his breakfast, dinner, and supper. When Igor flew like a falcon, then Vlur sped like a wolf shaking the cold dew off the grass—for they had exhausted their gallant steeds.

However unique its quality, *The Campaign of Igor* is not as absolutely isolated as it appeared to be at first sight. I have alluded already to some of its ancestry, and to its direct progeny. Traces have come down to us of other fragments, not directly dependent on it, but which belong, broadly speaking,

to the same school. One of these is the small fragment in honour of Prince Roman of Volynia (d. 1205); inserted in the Volynian Chronicle (v. *supra*). Another is a fragment of little over a hundred words inscribed *Oration* (*Slovo*) *on the Ruin of the Land of Russia.* It is the beginning of what was evidently a long and elaborate lament on the destruction of Russian power by the Tartars.

More important, and different from the rest in its subject-matter, is *The Appeal* (lit. *Word—Slovo*) *of Adam to Lazarus in Hell.* No Greek source of it has been found; and though *a priori* it is dangerous to admit the absolute originality of its matter, there can be no doubt as to the originality of its actual form. Its date is unknown. Ukrainian scholars (Franko and Hrushewsky) have assigned it, on rather slender internal evidence, to the thirteenth century, and to the south-west, but this is merely conjectural. The earliest manuscripts seem to belong to the fifteenth century. It has certain affinities of style with *The Campaign of Igor* and with other Kievian writings of the same family. *The Appeal of Adam* is also a prose-poem. But its rhythm seems to be less akin to that of the Kievian orators than to the prophetic books of the Slavonic Old Testament. The theme of the poem is Adam's appeal to Lazarus, about to leave hell on his resurrection, on behalf of all the righteous men of the Old Testament. The tone and the style of the poem will be best conveyed by an extract:

If I have sinned more than any man, it is according to my desert that Thou gavest me this suffering. I do not complain, O Lord! But for this am I sorry, that I was created in Thy image, and now the Devil insults me and torments me cruelly! If I, Adam, have transgressed Thy divine commandment—here Thou hast, O Lord, the first patriarch Abraham, who was Thy friend, who for Thy sake was ready to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, and Thou saidst: Through thee, Abraham, shall be blessed all the generations of earth, and here in hell he suffers, and sighs heavily. Descend, O Lord, for Abraham's sake! or has Abraham also sinned against Thee? . . .

And here is Noah, who was saved by Thee, Lord, from disastrous flood, and canst Thou not save him from Hell? . . .

And here is John, great among the prophets, Thy forerunner, Thy Baptist . . . who lived in the desert from his youth, eating wild honey—and in what, Lord, has he sinned against thee? On the earth he was insulted by Herod, and here with us in hell he is again put to torment. . . .

The oration ends with the descent into hell and the release of the righteous patriarchs. But there is in the questions of Adam a questioning, "Jobean" spirit which is rare in Old Russian writings. The powerful eloquence of the poem has deeply influenced the style of the prose-poems of Remizov, a writer saturated with the form and spirit of the old Russian apocryphas.

7. BETWEEN KIEV AND MOSCOW

In 1238–40 the Tartars, as the Mongols are always called in Russian sources, overran practically the whole of Russia, subjected all its eastern part, and destroyed Kiev. Except for the short period during which the Kievian tradition was continued in the Kingdom of Galicia, Russian civilization survived only in the north and east. Its centres there became the great merchant city of Novgorod, and the principalities of the Upper Volga, one of which, Moscow, ultimately succeeded in unifying the nation.

If we consider nothing but its literature, the period that extends from the Tartar invasion to the unification of Russia by Ivan III of Moscow may be called a Dark Age. Its literature is either a more or less impoverished reminiscence of Kievian traditions, or an unoriginal imitation of South Slavonic models. But here more than ever it is necessary to bear in mind that literature does not give the true measure of Old Russian culture. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Dark Age of literature, was at the same time the Golden Age of Russian religious painting.

Nowhere is the concretely æsthetic and non-intellectual character of Old Russian civilization so obviously apparent as in Novgorod. That wealthy city, for three hundred years the

source of the whole of Europe's supply of furs and other northern commodities, was ruled by an eminently art-loving aristocracy of merchant princes who succeeded in making of it something like a Russian Venice. But like Venice, though it produced a great art, Novgorod has no literature to speak of. The Novgorodian Chronicles, admirable though they are for their absolute freedom from irrelevant talk and for the strict matter-of-factness of their information, are not literature. The civilization of Novgorod is perhaps the most characteristic expression of old Russia, and the fact that it produced no literature is certainly significant.

The country ruled by the princes of the house of Suzdal (the present provinces of Moscow, Vladimir, Kostroma, Yaroslav, and Tver and the district of the White Lake), though inferior to Novgorod in cultural and economical achievement, produced more interesting literature during the "Dark Age" than its wealthier neighbour. The chronicles and the isolated "military narratives" (*voinskia povesti*) connected with the Tartar invasion are of considerable interest. The Life of Saint Alexander (d. 1264), the champion of Russia against the Latin West, is a particularly remarkable "military narrative" and has left a lasting trace on the national memory.

Still more interesting are the "military narratives" relating to the victory of Kulikovo. These are *The Legend* (*Skazanie*) *of the Rout of Mamay* (the vizier who commanded the Tartars), written in the early years of the fifteenth century by the priest Sophronius, or Sophonia (the readings vary) of Ryazan—and the *Zadonshchina* (i. e. the "Trans-Doniad"), written later in the fifteenth century. The *Rout of Mamay* is artistically the finer production. Its style is rhetorically and poetically coloured, but its construction is strictly narrative. Its interest, apart from the importance of its subject, lies in the author's genuine gift of poetical atmosphere, and his discrete and skilful use of reminiscences of *The Campaign of Igor*. Though on an inferior level to the older poem, the *Rout of Mamay* has genuine poetical merits, and some passages have deeply impressed themselves on the Russian imagination: such especially is the episode of Prince Dimitri and his boyar Bobrok

Volynsky riding out into the open steppe and listening to the mysterious sounds of the night, in which they read omens of the coming day. The *Zadonshchina* is still more full of reminiscences of *Igor*, but they are so mechanically and unintelligently assimilated and paraphrased that the whole thing looks rather like a parody.

Towards the end of the present period a new style of writing was imported by the numerous Serbian and Bulgarian clerics who came to Russia after the conquest of their countries by the Turks. The most outstanding of these ecclesiastics was Cyprian, Metropolitan of Moscow (d. 1404). The first Russian bookman to use the new style was Epiphanius the Wise, a monk of the Trinity Monastery, and a disciple of St. Sergius. The new style found its chief expression in hagiographical writings. Its main characteristic was a complete disregard for concrete and individual detail, and a systematically conventionalized treatment of the subject. The individual was reduced to the typical to such a degree that the writings of the school have practically no value as historical evidence. The life of a saint ceased to be a work of information, and became a decorative and devotional object. In Epiphanius's Life of St. Sergius this stage is not yet quite reached—he had a too intimate knowledge of his master to let the saint's personality be lost in a conventional pattern. But his other work, the Life of St. Stephen of Permia, became the type of hagiographical writings for the following centuries. The influence of the new style introduced by Epiphanius was not limited to hagiography. Its conventional and impersonal rhetoric was adopted by all writers with any literary pretension. All Muscovite bookmen aspired towards it, and fell short of it only in the measure of their illiteracy. The very language was changed under South Slavonic influence, and a stricter and more pedantic standard Church Slavonic replaced the strongly vernacularized speech of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Somewhat off the main track, and probably not intended as literature, is *Khozhenie za tri Darii*, by Afanasi Nikitin, a merchant of the city of Tver. It is the account of his commercial travels and life in India, in 1469–72. It is interesting

not only as an account of India a quarter of a century before the discovery of the sea route, but also as an exceptionally revelatory reflection of the mental experience of an average Russian in unfamiliar surroundings.

8. THE MUSCOVITE PERIOD

Within less than a generation of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks the Prince of Moscow became the effective monarch of all Great Russia, and threw off the last remnants of Tartar supremacy (1480). This succession of events produced a complete revolution in the state of the Orthodox world, which was immediately taken into account by the Muscovites and became the basis of all their political philosophy. Moscow became the Third Rome, the sole depository of all imperial power and the only receptacle of unsullied Orthodoxy. The marriage of Ivan III to a Palæologue princess and the assumption by him of the title of Autocrat (from the Greek rendering of *Imperator*) transformed the Prince of Moscow, who had been little more than a *primus inter pares* among other princes, into the sole successor of the Cæsars. The official crowning and assumption of the title of Tsar (Cæsar) was the work of Ivan III's grandson and namesake of "Terrible" reputation.

The first century or so after the accession of the first Autocrat (1462) was marked by violent political and religious conflicts. They gave rise to an interesting polemical literature, which, however, belongs to the domain of the general rather than of the literary historian. The conflict was at first chiefly between the clerical party of bishops and abbots, who insisted on the worldly claims of the Church and on taking an active part in secular government, and the party of the "Hermits from beyond the Volga," whose head-quarters was the monastery of St. Cyril on the White Lake (east of St. Petersburg), and who favoured a more mystical and ascetic conception of the Church. The chief man of the clerical party was Joseph, Abbot of Volok, a vigorous pamphleteer who wrote in a correct Slavonic, full of expletives. The leader

of the Hermits was the Blessed Nil of Sorsky, a disciple of Mount Athos and the most remarkable mystical and ascetic writer of old Russia. The Hermits were supported by part of the aristocracy who regarded the bishops and abbots as usurpers of their political rights and desired to limit the growing power of the Tsar.

By the middle of the sixteenth century the religious controversy was over, the clerical party being victorious on all points. But the political controversy between the partisans of autocracy and the oligarchs was continued into the reign of Ivan the Terrible (b. 1530, crowned Tsar 1547, d. 1584).

Tsar Ivan himself was no doubt a cruel and hateful tyrant, but he was a pamphleteer of genius. His epistles are the masterpieces of Old Russian (and perhaps all Russian) political journalism. They may be too full of texts from the Scriptures and the Fathers, and their Slavonic is not always correct. But they are full of powerful and cruel irony, expressed in terms most pointedly forcible. The shameless bully and the great polemist are seen together in a flash when he taunts the runaway Kurbsky by the question: "If you are so sure of your righteousness, why did you run away and not prefer martyrdom at my hands?" Such strokes were well calculated to drive his correspondent into a rage. The part of the cruel tyrant elaborately upbraiding an escaped victim while he continues torturing those in his reach may be detestable, but Ivan plays it with truly Shaksperian breadth of imagination. Besides his letters to Kurbsky he wrote other epistles—also satirical invectives at men in his power. The best is the letter to the abbot of St. Cyril's Monastery where he pours out all the poison of his grim irony on the unascetic life of the boyars, shorn monks and exiled by his order. The picture he gives of their luxurious life in the citadel of asceticism is a masterpiece of trenchant sarcasm.

Ivan's principal opponent, Prince Andrey Mikhaylovich Kurbsky (*c.* 1528–1583), was one of the most cultured and enlightened men in Muscovy. He played a prominent part in the administration and distinguished himself as a soldier at the siege of Kazan and in the Livonian war. In 1563, during the war

with Lithuania, when Ivan had instituted his reign of terror, Kurbsky, fearing responsibility for a reverse of his army, deserted to the enemy. From Lithuania he wrote the series of violent epistles to the Tsar and the *History* of his reign which have made his name famous. Kurbsky's *History* is pragmatic and not annalistic, and shows him a man of keen and constructive intellect. He deliberately exaggerates the crimes of his arch-enemy, and is not to be trusted as impartial evidence. His style is strongly infused with West Russian, Polish, and Latin influences. It does not reveal any original literary temperament. The same with his epistles; for all their sincere violence, just indignation, and forcible argument, as literature they are inferior to those of his opponent.

The fixation of the Muscovite mentality took place in the middle of the sixteenth century. About that time a series of compilations were undertaken and accomplished which together form a sort of encyclopædia of Muscovite culture. These works cannot all be regarded as falling within the cognizance of literary history. Thus the *Stoglav* (*Book of a Hundred Chapters*), which contains the decisions on dogmatic, ritual, administrative, and disciplinary subjects of a Provincial Council of the Russian Church held in Moscow in 1551, belongs to canon law rather than to literature. Nor has the *Domostroy* (*House Orderer*) edited by the priest Sylvester (d. 1566) substantially greater claims to be regarded as literature: it is a didactic work setting down in literary Slavonic, but without literary pretensions, the principles according to which the head of the house is to rule his family.

A more literary work is the great Menologion or Saints' Calendar (*Chetyi-Minei*) compiled by Macarius, Metropolitan of Moscow (1542–63). It remained the official and authoritative calendar of the Russian Church till it was replaced in the reign of Peter the Great by the similar, but more scholarly, compilation of St. Demetrius of Rostov. Macarius also gave its final form to another vast work of codification: *The Book of Degrees* (i. e. of Generations, *Stepennaya Kniga*), so called because the Russian princes and tsars were grouped in the order of their generations. The collection had been started by

Cyprian, the fourteenth-century Serbian Metropolitan of Moscow, but was completed only towards 1563. In substance the *Book of Degrees* was a compilation from the Russian Annals, but these were recast so as to suit the literary taste and the historical philosophy of sixteenth-century Muscovy. The Annals, officially conducted throughout this period by Muscovite scribes, also reflect the all-pervading taste for rhetoric, and the political philosophy of the time.

9. MUSCOVITE HISTORIES

Apart from these compilations, and apart from the official Annals, there was no lack of historical literature in Muscovite times. Prince Kurbsky's *History* stands somewhat apart, from the fact of having absorbed Western influences. But there was a local tradition of historical narratives of isolated, chiefly military events, with a developed style of their own which goes back to the *Rout of Mamay* and to the Russian Josephus, and is thus a collateral relative of the *Campaign of Igor*. An early example is the *Story of the taking of Pskov* (1510) by the Muscovites, one of the most beautiful "short histories" of Old Russia. The history of the Muscovites' leisurely and steady perseverance towards a foredoomed end is told with admirable simplicity and admirable art. An atmosphere of descending doom pervades the whole narrative: all is useless, and whatever the Pskovites can do the Muscovite cat will take its time and eat the mouse when and how it pleases.

The series of events that stimulated the most intense historiographical activity was the great political crisis of the early seventeenth century (1604–13) known in Russian historical tradition as the Time of Troubles (or Seditions—*Smutnoye Vremya*). Three works especially stand out: those by Prince Ivan Katyrev of Rostov, by Avraami Palitsyn, Bursar of the Trinity Monastery, and by the Scribe Ivan Timofeyev. Katyrev's narrative is the most distinctly literary of the three: it is in the traditional style of the "military story," with very little regard for concrete details, with numerous recurrent stock

passages, at times attaining to something like poetry. Palitsyn's work is the most perfectly written: it is a piece of rhetoric, but really powerful and skilful rhetoric. It is inspired with a definite purpose, and displays great ability in the effective arrangement of its climaxes. The passages describing the horrors of civil war and foreign invasion are particularly memorable. Palitsyn's work was the most popular of the whole family, and up to recent times his interpretation of the facts dominated Russian literary and historical tradition. Timofeyev's work is the most curious of the set, in fact the greatest curio in the whole range of Muscovite literature. His amazingly quaint and elaborate style is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Muscovite rhetoric. It is one continuous paraphrase. Timofeyev will on no account call a spade a spade. The rich become in his hands "those who have large receptacles." A river is "the element of watery nature." His grammar is complicated and contorted, and his meaning as a rule wonderfully obscure. But he is also the shrewdest and most intelligent of all contemporary historians. His story is a real story with a beginning and an end. Timofeyev has been given high praise as a chonicler and as a trustworthy witness by the greatest of our modern historians, Professor Platonov, who has singled him out as a particular favourite.

A last fruit of the Old Russian "military story" is the *Story of the Defence of Azov* by the Don Cossacks against the Turks in 1641. It is really the official report of the Cossacks to the Tsar, but it is written as a story with definite literary aims, and as such became widely popular. It is a sort of epitome of all the traditions of Old Russian war narrative, with echoes of the Russian Josephus and all its progeny, of the *Rout of Mamay*, of the *Tale of Troy*—and on the other hand of more modern forms of folk-lore, as represented now by the so-called Bylinas and by the robber songs. It is full of the poetry of war, and is one of the most stimulating of Old Russian writings.

The majority of lives of saints written during the Muscovite period are in the style introduced by the Serbs and by Epiphanius, and have no individual interest. Apart from the rest

stands the Life of St. Juliania Lazarevsky, by her son Yuri Osorgin. St. Juliania herself is an exception, being the only Russian female saint who was neither a nun nor a princess, but merely a virtuous and charitable matron. The fact of a son's writing the life of his mother is also unique. The Life is full of concrete detail, and is inspired by an intense feeling of Christian charity. It is one of the most attractive evocations of Old Russian life in the whole of literature.

10. THE BEGINNINGS OF FICTION

It is very difficult to draw a line between hagiography and biography, and fiction. There is a whole intermediate region which modern historians are usually inclined to include in fiction, but which the contemporary reader did not in any way distinguish from hagiographical writings. These are the numerous legends which stand in somewhat the same relation to the historical lives of saints as the apocrypha stands to the Bible. Some of them were included in Macarius's great compilation, and the unofficial Prologues contain an even greater number of them. They were regarded of course primarily as books of edification, but the romantic element, the element of marvel and of narrative interest, is far more prominent than in the approved type of saint's life. Some of them have a distinctly fairy-tale appearance, as for instance the charming *Legend of Prince Peter of Murom and of the Maiden Fevronia*, with its battle against the dragon and the wise maiden guessing the Prince's riddles. The maiden becomes the Prince's wife, but the people and boyars demand that she should be dismissed, as they do not want to serve a commoner. So she leaves her husband's house and enters a monastery. So does the Prince. They live separated in two different monasteries, but continue to love each other. When Peter feels his end approaching, he sends word to Fevronia, who prays that she may die simultaneously with her prince. Her prayer is granted. As they had taken monastic vows they have to be buried separately, but their bodies find their way to the common tomb they had prepared for themselves before they were separated. The au-

thorities separate them again, but again they are found together and are finally left to lie in the same tomb.

A further step towards fiction is to be found in a remarkable work of the seventeenth century—*the Story of Savva Grudtsyn.* It is in literary Church Slavonic and has all the appearance of a story of pure fact, with dates and place names in abundance, but it is probably a work of fiction written for purposes of edification. Savva Grudtsyn is a kind of Russian Dr. Faustus, who sells his soul to the Devil in return, not for knowledge, but for power and pleasure. The Devil serves him well, but finally Savva repents and saves his soul in a monastery.

While these first essays in religious and edifying fiction were growing up as a branch of the traditional hagiographical tree, other types of fiction began cropping up on all sides.

It is highly probable that the narrative oral poetry of the Russian people in the form we now know it came into existence in the middle or second half of the sixteenth century. It is certain that its first written traces appear in the early seventeenth century. In the course of this century it begins to exercise an appreciable influence on written literature. We have seen its influence in the *Siege of Azov.* It is still more unmistakable in the remarkable story of *Gorë-Zloschastie* (*Woe-Misfortune*), which is an isolated instance of the use of the actual *metre* of the narrative folk-song in a literary work. The poem, like *Savva Grudtsyn,* is a work of edification, in a style that is not derived from ecclesiastical Muscovite literature, but from the devotional oral poetry of the people. "Gorë Zloschastie" is a man's ill luck personified in the form of a kind of guardian devil, who accompanies his man from his cradle to his grave. He leads a fine young man of respectable and wealthy family from his father's house and into the wide world; brings him to the tavern and the high road, and thence well-nigh to the gallows. The young man is finally allowed to escape with his soul safe and like Savva Grudtsyn ends his days in a monastery, the never-failing refuge of the Russian sinner. The figure of Gorë is a powerfully poetical symbol, and the whole work bears evidence of being the work of a poet of considerable talent and originality. Like all Old Russian fiction

it is anonymous, and cannot be dated with any degree of exactness. It appears to belong to the second half of the seventeenth century.

The influence of the narrative folk-song is again clearly apparent in two romances that were introduced into Russia from abroad at some time in the first half of the seventeenth century —*Bova Korolevich* and *Eruslan Lazarevich*. Bova is of French origin, being the descendant of the Carolingian romance *Bueves d'Anston* (the English version is called *Bevis of Hampton*). To Russia it came by way of a North Italian *Bovo d'Antona*, and thence through Bohemia and White Russia. In Russia it was completely assimilated and thoroughly Russianized. It is amusing to see how the French romance has been transformed into a story of purely fairy-tale adventure, with all the chivalrous and courteous element eliminated. *Bova* and *Eruslan* (which is of oriental origin and a distant descendant of the Persian Rustam) were immensely popular as chap-books. It was from them the poets of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries formed their idea of Russian folklore, of which they were the principal representatives before the discovery of the "Bylinas." *

A very curious little production connected, like *Gorë-Zloschastie* and *Bova* with folk poetry, but again in a different way is *The Story of a Young Man and a Girl*. It is a dialogue between a suitor and a disdainful maiden. He praises her in imaginative language closely connected with the language of folk-poetry. To every tirade of his she answers with a tirade of coarse and equally imaginative vituperation, which is also connected with the popular charms and curses. She ends, however, by yielding. It is a piece of very elaborate verbal art, and has no parallel in Old Russian literature. It seems to have been composed in the north (where folk poetry was and is most alive) in the end of the seventeenth century.

* Another popular chap-book which may be mentioned in this connexion is *Apollon of Tyre* a version of the old Greek romance that is also the source of Shakspere's *Pericles*. It came to Russia rather late in the seventeenth century *via* a Latin version, but the Russian reader easily discovered in it the familiar Byzantine flavour, and rapidly adopted it. Remizov has made use of it in one of his most delightful legendary stories.

These last-mentioned works are entirely secular and free from all intention of edifying. A still more distinctly secular and unedifying kind of fiction appears in the same century in the form of stories derived from, or similar to, old French fabliaux and the tales of the *Decameron*. A good example of a Russianized fabliau (only recently published) is the *Story of the Merchant Karp Sutulov*, and of his wife, who successfully defended her virtue against all attempts made on it, by another merchant (a friend of Karp's), by her confessor, and by the bishop. The chief defect of this kind of stories lies in their language, which is a more or less colourless and illiterate form of literary Slavonic. This defect is not shared by the masterpiece of the Muscovite fabliau—the story of *Frol Skobeyev*. This interesting story is written without any literary pretences in a pure colloquial language, with a very simple syntax. It is a piece of vivid and cynical realism, free from all edifying or satirical intent, and telling in the calmest fashion and with evident, but unobtrusive, relish the tricks with the aid of which a low scrivener contrived to seduce and marry clandestinely the daughter of a nobleman, how he succeeded in reconciling himself with her parents, and becoming a favourite with them and ultimately a man of position. The naked and matter-of-fact simplicity of the story greatly enhances the effect of its cynical picaresqueness.

The only rival to *Frol Skobeyev*'s unique position in the (unconsciously) literary use of the vernacular is the delightful story of the Gremille (*Yorsh Shchetinnikov*) and of the lawsuit intended against him by his neighbour fishes of the lake of Rostov. It is also a picaresque story—for it tells of the Gremille's evading by lawful and lawless means all the rightful demands urged against him by the other fishes. The story is couched in the form of a lawsuit—and is a delightful parody of Muscovite legal procedure and legal language.

It is impossible to date these stories with any precision. Some of them may have been written in the early years of the eighteenth century, but in substance they all belong to that latter half of the seventeenth when Muscovy was still Muscovite, but the foundations of its traditional and ecclesiastic civiliza-

tion were being slowly undermined by a growing and disintegrating tide of secularization.

11. THE END OF OLD MUSCOVY: AVVAKUM

Before it came to an end, the civilization of Old Russia found something like its final and definitive expression in two very dissimilar, but, in a way, complementary figures—the Tsar Alexis and Archpriest Avvakum. Alexis (b. 1632, reigned 1645–76) was not a man of letters. He wrote little. A few letters (private letters, not polemical pamphlets in epistolary form) and an Instruction to his Falconers are all we have of him. But it is sufficient to make him the most attractive of Russian monarchs. He acquired the surname of *Tishayshiy*, which means most quiet, or most peaceful. Certain aspects of Russian Orthodoxy, not its most purely spiritual, but its æsthetic and worldly aspects, found in him their most complete expression. The essence of Alexis's personality is a certain spiritual epicureanism. It finds its expression in a firmly optimistic Christian faith, in a profound, but unfanatical, attachment to the sacred traditions and stately ritual of the Church, in a desire to see everyone round him happy and at peace, and in a highly developed capacity to extract a quiet and mellow enjoyment out of all things.

By an irony of fate the reign of this peace-, beauty-, and sport-loving monarch was one of the most agitated in Russian history. Apart from wars and intense social unrest it was marked by the Great Schism of the Russian Church, a tragical development which split in twain the conservative core of the nation and whose influence has lasted to this day. Its origin was connected with the revision of the translations of the liturgic books. In the preceding reign the development of printing made the fixation of the sacred texts a matter of particular importance. In the forties of the seventeenth century a revision of all sacred books, in agreement with the best available *Slavonic* texts, was carried out under the auspices of the Patriarch Joseph. It was largely done by a group of young secular priests, who were full of a zeal to purge the Russian

Church of the spirit of sloth and laxity, and demanded a stricter observance of tradition on the part of the clergy and laity. The reforms they introduced in discipline and ritual were conservative, and intended to revive the good practice of early Muscovite times. Among other things they renewed the practice of preaching, which had been in abeyance for about a century. One of the most outstanding and fervid of these conservative reformers was the priest (afterwards Archpriest) Avvakum, son of Peter (outside the nobility few Russians had surnames in the seventeenth century). He was the son of a country parson of the district of Nizhni-Novgorod, where he was born about 1620. In his fervour he more than once met with ill treatment at the hand of the laity and worldly priests, who resented his rigoristic preaching and his interference with the old established usages of lazy laxity.

In 1652 the Patriarch Joseph died, and was succeeded by Nikon, Archbishop of Novgorod. He had been a friend of the reformers and revisers. Once patriarch he decided to go one better in the revision of books and restoration of rituals, and, instead of limiting himself to Old Russian models, he turned to the Greeks. This new work of revision resulted in the publication of new texts, conforming to the Greek and (in points where the Russian practice was at variance with that of the Greeks) in certain changes in the ritual. This especially referred to the Russian practice of making the sign of the cross with two fingers, and saying *Alleluia* twice (*Alleluia, Alleluia, Glory to Thee, Lord*) instead of the Greek three fingers and treble Alleluia. It was these seemingly unimportant points that led to the schism. Avvakum and his friends refused to accept them and denounced Nikon as a heretic and a tool of Satan. The main reasons for their revolt was that they regarded the practice of the Russian Orthodox Church as one whole, dogma and ritual, of which not a tittle might be changed. The Greeks were no authority in the matter—Russia was the only repository of the faith and had nothing to learn from a nation whose orthodoxy had been adulterated by dallying with the heretic and subjection to the infidel. Nikon, who was then practically an autocrat, stood firm, and Avvakum and his friends were ex-

iled. Avvakum was sent to Siberia and there ordered to join the expeditionary force of Pashkov, whose task it was to conquer Dauria (the present Transbaykalia). Pashkov was a valiant "builder of empire," but had no patience with any religious nonsense. He treated Avvakum with brutal cruelty.

For nine years Avvakum remained in Siberia, dragged about from place to place and persecuted in every manner. In 1664 he was brought back to Moscow, where during his absence considerable changes had taken place, Nikon had fallen, and a synod was going to meet to judge both Nikon and Avvakum. The Tsar was disposed to concessions. But Avvakum was opposed to all compromise, and Alexis was forced to submit to the guidance of the Greek party. The Synod of 1666–7 condemned Avvakum's ritual tenets, and thus the schism became final: the conservatives were henceforward schismatics (in Russian, *Raskolniks*). Avvakum himself was shorn monk and exiled to Pustozersk in the far north-east of Russia opposite the coast of Nova Zembla. In his exile he became an even more prominent, active, and dangerous leader than he had been before. It was then he wrote his famous *Life* and his powerful epistles to his friends, in which he urged them to keep faithful to the old faith, to defy their persecutors, and to seek martyrdom. He himself by writing a violent letter to the young Tsar Theodore seems to have courted martyrdom. It came at last: he was burnt at the stake in April 1681, together with his most faithful and trusty friends, the monk Epiphanius and the priest Lazarus.

Avvakum's writings are not voluminous. They consist of a *Life written by himself* (1672–3) and of a score of epistles, hortatory and consolatory to friends, and abusive to enemies, all of them written during his last years at Pustozersk. Avvakum is above all remarkable for his language, which is the first attempt to use colloquial Russian for literary purposes. Though we do not know anything of the character of his oral preaching, it is highly probable that his written work had its roots in his spoken sermons. The daring originality of Avvakum's venture cannot be over-estimated, and the use he made of

his Russian places him in the very first rank of Russian writers: no one has since excelled him in vigour and raciness, and in the skilful command of all the expressive means of the language of every day for the most striking literary effects. The value and freshness of his familiar Russian is enhanced by the parallel use he makes of Church Slavonic; he uses the latter only in quotations and allusions from the holy books, and the sacred texts shine like hard and solid jewels in the flexible and living texture of his spontaneous Russian. Avvakum is a great artist of words and his example is still full of instruction to every writer of Russian.

But Avvakum is not only the efficient master of expression. He is a firm and fiery fighter, a good hater and a good friend. Scorn and indignation are mixed in his writings with a fierce and manly tenderness that has nothing sentimental in it: the best lot he desires for his best disciples is a martyr's death. His style is constantly relieved by a delightful humour, which verges from that Christian humour at one's own expense that is so genuinely akin to humility, to stinging and cruel sarcasm at the expense of his foes, which, however, is never far removed from a smiling pity for the torturers who know not what they are doing.

Avvakum's masterpiece is his *Life*, in which he relates his strife for the truth, and his sufferings at the hands of Pashkov and of the bishops. It has been admirably translated into English by Miss Jane E. Harrison and Miss Hope Mirrlees, whose translation should be read by everyone who is at all interested in things Russian, or in good literature. I will here attempt to quote several passages from his epistles. In my translation I have tried to convey, however imperfectly, the effect of the mixture of biblical with vulgar diction of the original.

The first extract is from the famous epistle in which he exhorts his followers not to shirk martyrdom:

> The Kingdom of heaven is ready to fall into your mouth; but you hesitate, saying: "My children are small, my wife is young,

I do not want to ruin myself!" But think of those ladies,* what wealth and honour they sacrificed! And women at that. And you, a great big man, are more foolish than women; you are not whole in your mind. Well, you will see your children married, you will give joy to your wife, and afterwards? † is it not the grave? Death all the same, but a different death, for it will not be death for Christ's sake, just the common end of all flesh. But blessed are those who die for the Lord! . . .

And even if they do begin to scourge you or to burn you: all the more glory to God for that! For this we came out of our mother's womb. You will not be very long burning in the fire—just the twinkling of an eye—and the soul is free. Are you afraid of the furnace? Play the man, spit at it, do not be afraid! Fear comes before the fire; but once you are in it, you forget it all. You catch fire, and here they are, Christ and the hosts of angels with Him; they take your soul out of the body, and carry it to Christ, and He, the good Lord, blesses it and fortifies it with divine force. It is no longer heavy, but becomes as though winged; it flies off in company with the angels; it hovers like a bird, glad to be free from its prison. The prison is consumed in the flames, but the soul, like a pearl, or like pure gold, is carried up by the angels into the glory of God the Father. The prison is hewn to pieces by the halberds of the Nikonites, but it feels naught; it is mere dust, it burns like unfeeling rock, or like earth.

Let every true one not let his ears get flabby, and let him not hesitate. Walk you boldly into the fire and suffer gladly for the sake of Christ. The Nikonites have massacred myriads of people, believing it to be agreeable to God. And I rejoice that they should have done so: they have hallowed the Russian land with martyrs' blood. Be not sluggish, poor dears, be eager to sacrifice yourselves. My poor little Russians, glad they are to have found at last a tormentor: in legions do they leap into the fire. I would lief die, and then die again for the sake of Christ our God. He is sweet to taste, is Jesus! Remember the three Hebrew children in the blazing furnace! Nebuchadnezzar looked on, and lo! there was the Son of God fourth of their company. Fear not, nor will the Son of God forsake you. Go about with all hope, run and

* Morozova and Princess Urusova, two noble ladies who suffered for the old faith.

† Cf. these words with the well-known passage in Tolstoy's Confession.

jump into the flames. Here is my body, Devil, take and eat it; my soul you cannot take!

The following is Avvakum's opinion on the new western style of painting that was being introduced into Muscovy:

By the indulgence of God an unseemly style of sacred painting has multiplied itself in Russia. Painters paint, and the Church authorities condone it, and they are all on their way towards the abyss of perdition, holding fast to each other. . . . They paint the image of Emmanuel—making his face plump, his lips red, his hair curly, his arms thick and muscular, and his legs likewise, and altogether they make him look like a German, only that he lacks a sword at the hip. All this is according to the manner of the Franks; that is, of the Germans. . . . Do not worship these unseemly images, servant of God, painted as they are after the German tradition, as the Hebrew children at Babylon did not worship the golden calf. Fat was that calf and big, like these images of to-day. It was not thus that the good painters of old did paint the images of the saints: they made their faces and arms, and all their senses, refined, as though exhausted by fasting, and work, and every contrition. And now you have changed this fashion, and paint them like unto your own selves.

The last extract expresses his views on the astrologers and almanac-mongers:

Of old Devil did say: "I shall erect my throne in heaven and I shall be equal unto the Almighty"; and likewise do the almanac-mongers say: "We understand the things of heaven and earth, and who is equal unto us?" But what Christians achieve is not external wisdom, nor the understanding of the movements of the moon, but they mount to heaven itself by their humility, and their bodies remain incorrupt on earth. Look then, proud almanac-monger, where are thy Pythagorases and Platos: they have all been eaten by worms, like so many swine. But my saints, for the sake of their humility, have been glorified by God. . . . Pigs and cows know more than you do: before bad weather they grunt and they low, and hurry to their sties and pens, and then the rain comes. And you rational pigs, you measure the face of the earth and heaven, but cannot foretell you own hour when you shall die. It's a hopeless job with you, fat steers that you are.

Avvakum's writings were immensely influential with his followers, the Old Believers or Raskolniks. But his manner of writing found no imitator among them, while outside their communities no one read him before the mid-nineteenth century except for purposes of confutation.

CHAPTER II

THE PASSING OF OLD RUSSIA

1. THE SOUTH-WESTERN REVIVAL

AFTER the Union of Lublin (1569) all the west of Russia (White Russia, Galicia, and Ukraine) came under the direct rule of Poland. The Poles, organized by the Jesuits, started a vigorous campaign against the Orthodox faith and the Russian nationality. They easily succeeded in winning over the West Russian nobility, but met with the determined opposition of the middle and lower classes. The most active form this opposition took was the series of Cossack rebellions. Its other aspect was a religious and intellectual movement in the Church and laity. Schools were founded, and there sprung up an active polemical literature to counteract the Roman propaganda.

The early stage of the movement produced a writer of considerable originality and talent in the person of Ivan Vyshensky (of Vyshnya, in Galicia, *flor.* 1588–1614). He is a sort of attenuated Ukrainian Avvakum. He opposed the tendency of his co-religionaries to adopt Latin methods in fighting the Latins, which seemed to him in itself a capitulation to the alien civilization. But he was not successful in stemming the tide of Latin influence. The advantages to be got from adopting the learning of the Jesuits were too obvious—and by the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century the method of fighting the enemy with his own weapons had finally triumphed among the West Russians. The Academy of Kiev, founded (1631) by Peter Mohila (1596–1647), Abbot of Pechersky and afterwards Metropolitan of Kiev, became the centre of all intellectual activity in West Russia.

The Latin culture adopted by West Russia was purely ec-

clesiastical and scholastic, and so was the literature it produced. Its principal interest lies in its attempts to assimilate Polish and Polish-Latin forms of poetry and drama, which will be dealt with in another section of this chapter. Apart from these Kievian literature consisted mainly of polemical writings, sermons and text-books. The sacred oratory of the period is a conscientious effort to adopt the forms of classical rhetoric. Its principal representatives were Ioanniki Golyatovsky, Rector of the Kiev Academy, and Lazar Baranovich, Archbishop of Chernigov, both of whom flourished in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. More important are the writers of the following period whose work belongs already to the reign of Peter the Great.

2. THE TRANSITION IN MOSCOW AND PETERSBURG

In Muscovy western influences began to play an appreciable part about the year 1669, when the westernizer Artamon Matveyev became head of the administration.

They came by two different channels—one from the south-west, the other *via* the German Liberty (*Nemetskaya Sloboda*) of Moscow. This was a settlement of foreigners, in the military or financial service of the Government, and of foreign business men, nearly all of them belonging to the Protestant nations, German, Dutch, and Scottish. As literature and art were mainly an ecclesiastical business, the predominating western influence in literature was at first that of the south-western current.

By the time Peter the Great began his "Reforms," the progress of westernization had advanced considerably in Moscow. But it had proceeded along familiar lines, westernizing the fabric of the Russian Church, but leaving it the centre of all civilization. Peter's reforms were far more revolutionary. They aimed at displacing the Church from its place of honour, and at secularizing the whole of the Russian polity.

Literature took some time before it fully felt the new state of things, and the literature of the reign of Peter is largely a continuation of the preceding period. Its most outstanding

men of letters were three prelates of Ukrainian origin, bred in the Latin methods of the Kiev Academy. St. Demetrius Tuptalo (1651–1709), Metropolitan of Rostov, Stephen Yavorsky, (1658–1722), *locum tenens* of the patriarchal chair, and Theophan Prokopovich (1681–1736), Archbishop of Novgorod.

Demetrius of Rostov is a particularly attractive character. A great scholar and lover of books and learning, he was a peace-loving, meek, and charitable prelate, who won the boundless love and gratitude of his flock. After his death he came to be venerated as a saint and was officially canonized in 1757. He is the most exquisite fruit of the cultural revival of seventeenth-century Kiev. His most voluminous work is his Calendar of Saints, which, compiled along more European and scholarly lines than Macarius's, replaced the older work and is to this day the standard compendium of Russian hagiology. He is particularly interesting as a playwright (v. *infra*).

Stephen Yavorsky is chiefly notable as a preacher. His sermons are composed in a simple and manly style, free from excessive rhetorical ornament. They are often outspoken in dealing with current issues. Yavorsky deeply resented many of Peter's innovations, and showed sympathy with the Old Muscovite opposition. He had the courage openly to rebuke Peter for his divorce, lamented the fate of the Church in a secularized Russia, and dared to raise his voice against the intolerable weight of conscriptions and taxes that ground down the lower classes.

Theophan Prokopovich was a younger man, and animated with a different spirit. In secularizing his own mentality he went further than any other prelate. Very widely educated, he was the first Russian writer to go direct to the fountainhead of European culture in Italy, and not to be satisfied with Polish and Polish-Latin learning. He was a powerful orator, and his funeral oration on Peter the Great remained for over a century the most famous piece of Russian solemn oratory. His sermons and orations are secular in tone. They are inspired with a cult of enlightened despotism, and with a hero-worship of the great despot, that sounds even less Protestant than pagan.

The secular literature of the age of Peter discarded Church Slavonic, and made Russian the literary language. But it was a curious Russian, full of Slavonic reminiscences and saturated with undigested words of every conceivable foreign origin—Greek, Latin, Polish, German, Dutch, Italian, and French. The formal rupture with the old language was symbolized by the introduction of a new alphabet, in which the form of the Slavonic letters was modified so as to resemble Latin characters. Henceforward Russia had two alphabets: the Church continued using the old alphabet with the old language; the lay society used nothing but the new. The books printed in "civil" characters during Peter's reign and some time afterwards were either laws and official resolutions, or translations. As the character of Peter's reforms was above all practical, the books translated all referred to practical knowledge.

Of the original writings of the period those of Peter himself are easily the best. Peter was a born writer. His Russian was quaintly mixed with barbarisms, but he used it with vigour, terseness and originality. His literary originality is evident everywhere—in his journals, in his letters, even, and perhaps best of all, in his official ordinances. The vivid and realistic imagery of his style makes his ukases the most enjoyable literature of the time. He had a genius for pithy and memorable statement, and many of his sayings still live in everyone's memory.

Of the other secular writers of the period the most interesting are Ivan Pososhkóv (1652–1726), a tradesman from the neighbourhood of Moscow and a self-educated man, who wrote a book *On Indigence and Wealth* and Vasili Nikitich Tatishchev (1686–1750), whose History of Russia, though formless from the literary point of view, is the first really scholarly attempt to tackle the vast material contained in the Russian Annals, together with the evidence of foreign writers. It is quite on a level with contemporary European erudition. Tatishchev was one of the most cultured men of his class and time. He played a part in history, as a politician (in 1730, when he was one of the leaders of the anti-oligarchic party) and an administrator. His *Testament*, addressed to his son, is an in-

teresting document, reflecting the high sense of duty and practical patriotism that is characteristic of the men of Peter's school.

3. THE FIRST LITERARY VERSE

The writing of verse was first introduced into Russia from Poland in the late sixteenth century. The oldest extant specimens are to be found in the rhymed preface to the Ostrog Bible of 1581. In the seventeenth century much rhymed verse was written by West Russian scholars. The prosody they employed was Polish, which, like French and Italian, is based on the counting of syllables, without any obligatory position for stress accent. The matter of this West Russian poetry is panegyrical or didactic. It was written by men connected in one way or another with the ecclesiastical schools. About 1670 it was imported to Moscow by the White-Russian cleric Symeon of Polotsk, who flourished at the court of Alexis and of his son Theodore, and attained considerable elegance in the turning of syllabic verses. But no trace of anything that may, except by courtesy, be styled poetry is to be discovered before the age of Peter. Apart from dramatic poetry the only versifier of the school with a grain of the poet in him was Theophan Prokopovich. His pastoral elegy on the hard times that befell the men of Peter's making after the death of the Great Monarch is one of the first genuinely poetical literary lyrics in the language.

When young Muscovite laymen began to get acquainted with the technique of rhyming, they began trying their hand in amatory verse. Doggerel rhymes on amatory subjects are extant from the last years of the seventeenth century.* In the reign of Peter the Great this new art spread rapidly. By the time of his death rhymed love-songs had become quite a social institution. Manuscript collections of love poems in syllabic verse from the first half of the eighteenth century have come down to us. They are a reflection of the love-songs that were current

* It is interesting to note that the oldest specimens occur in criminal lawsuits.

at the time in Germany. Altogether the Germans played a prominent part in the first developments of Russian poetry. Wilhelm Mons, a German of Moscow who was the lover of Peter's wife Catherine and was executed in 1724, wrote amatory verses in Russian, but in German characters. They have a quaint intensity that makes us believe that he was something of a poet. The first attempts to introduce regular feet into Russian verse were made by two Germans, the Pastor Ernst Glück (in whose house Catherine I had been a servant), and the Magister Johann Werner Pauss. They translated Lutheran hymns into a Russian which, though very incorrect, is studiously pure from foreign words. By 1730 Russian society was ready to receive a more ambitious and regular poetry on the European model.

4. THE DRAMA

The ritual of the Eastern Church—like that of the Western—contained the germs of drama. But, contrary to what happened in the West, they remained purely ritual and symbolical, and did not grow into dramatic representations. The Russian drama is entirely an importation from the West. Like most western things it came to Russia by two distinct routes. The one leads from the Latin school drama to the Academy of Kiev and thence to Moscow; the other direct from the strolling, secular players of Germany to the German Liberty of Moscow.

School dramas on religious subjects were introduced into the West Russian schools at a very early date, before the end of the sixteenth century. By the middle of the seventeenth they were a popular and stable institution. When not in Latin or Polish, they were always translations from Latin or Polish. Their style was mediæval—they were the late-born children of the miracle and mystery play. The neo-classical theory of dramatic poetry was taught in the class of rhetoric in the Kiev Academy, but before the eighteenth century these theories did not affect the practice. The Kievian students continued playing, and their masters translated or adapted, plays of a purely mediæval type. There is very little originality in the serious

parts of these plays, but the comic interludes early received independent treatment. Native Ukrainian characters—the Cossack, the clerk, the Jew, the braggart Pole, the faithless wife and the comic husband, became traditional types, which survived the interlude and its successor the puppet-play, and live for ever in the early tales of Gogol. Before long the school drama left the school walls and went out into the wide world. Strolling bands of students performing miracle plays became a popular feature of Ukrainian life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A further development was the puppet theatre, which finally assumed an entirely popular character and became one of the important starting points of modern Ukrainian literature.

When Kievian prelates and clerics came to Muscovy to rule the Muscovite Church, the school drama spread over Great Russia. Wherever there was an Ukrainian bishop or an Ukrainian rector of a seminary, Kievian plays were acted, and imitated. But the school drama did not flourish on Great Russian soil as it did in Ukraine and never became a popular institution. One of the reasons for this was that here it had an important rival in the secular play of German origin, which came before it and had a greater influence on the history of the Russian drama.

In 1672 Tsar Alexis, advised by his westernizing minister, Artamon Matveyev, caused Dr. Gregori, the Lutheran pastor of the German Liberty of Moscow, to form a troupe of amateur players to act before the Tsar's Majesty. Plays of the repertory of the German strolling players were translated by scribes of the Foreign Office into stilted and unidiomatic Church Slavonic prose (which sounds especially quaint in the comic parts), and a theatre was instituted at the Royal Palace. One of the first plays to be produced was a distant descendant of *Tamburlaine the Great*. It was only after Gregori's first production that Symeon of Polotsk ventured to introduce the Kievian school drama and wrote his *Action of the Prodigal Son* in rhymed syllabic verse. In the last years of the century, with the growth of Kievian influence in Muscovy, the rhymed school drama became predominant, but under Peter the Great the

secular prose play translated from the German again took the upper hand. Public theatres were opened and the school drama was relegated to the seminaries and academies.

From the literary point of view by far the greater part of this early drama is uninteresting, and unoriginal. The secular prose drama is outside literature. The same cannot be said of the verse drama. Besides an interesting series of realistic comic interludes, which are perhaps the most live thing in the Ukrainian literature in the age of the Hetmans, it produced in the plays of Demetrius of Rostov and of Theophan Prokopovich also serious works of genuine literary value. Those of St. Demetrius are particularly attractive. They are quaintly baroque in their strangely concrete realism in the representation of the supernatural and in their audacious use of humour when speaking of things solemn. The dialogue of the shepherds in his *Nativity Play* before the apparition of the angels, and their discussion of the appearance of the angels while they are approaching them, are particularly good.

Theophan Prokopovich, who had studied in Italy and was much more modern than St. Demetrius, broke away from the mystery-play tradition, and his tragicomedy of *Saint Vladimir* (1705) is the first-fruit of classical theory in Russia. Its model is the Italian renaissance drama. It is a *pièce à thèse* dealing with the introduction of Christianity into Russia by St. Vladimir in spite of the opposition of the heathen priests. These priests are satirically intended—they stand for the "idolatrous" Roman Catholics and conservative Orthodox ritualists, over whom triumphs the rational Christianity of the enlightened despot Vladimir-Peter. Together with his lyrical poetry and with the plays of St. Demetrius, Theophan's dramatic work marks the highest poetic level reached by the Kievian school.

5. FICTION AND CHAP-BOOKS

With the evolution of Russian prose fiction the south-west had little to do, nor was it connected with the clergy. It answered to a demand of the educated, or semi-educated laity.

Young men of the nobility and gentry, government scribes (especially those of the Foreign Office), and open-minded young merchants of Moscow and of the commercial north were the first readers of fiction, the translators, copiers, and authors of the first Russian novels. Our principal landmark in the early history of Russian fiction is a group of works of fiction translated in Moscow in or about the year 1677. These stories are not Russianized out of recognition, as is the case with the earlier *Bova*, and retain in their heavy, unidiomatic Slavonic traces of the languages from which they were translated. They include a series of romances translated from the Polish, that go back in substance to the romances of chivalry of the late Middle Ages and early renaissance. It was precisely their foreign, un-Muscovite spirit that attracted the young boyars and scribes to these stories. What they liked most was the presentation of romantic, chivalrous, and sentimental love, a feeling so conspicuously absent in Old Russian literature. Fiction became widely popular and was widely circulated in manuscript far into the eighteenth century, but no novel was printed in Russia before 1750.

Original novel-writing after these new models began in the time of Peter. Several manuscript novels are extant belonging to the first half of the eighteenth century. They follow a more or less uniform pattern. The subject is always the experiences of a young Russian gentleman in foreign countries, where he meets with more or less romantic and sentimental adventures. The style sometimes inclines to rhythmical parallelism, and the characters are often made to speak in rhymed doggerel. Together with the love rhymes of the period they were the irruption into Russian civilization of the Western conception of sentimental and gallant love.

Standing quite apart from this main line of development is the one preserved fragment of what its modern editor has called a "novel in verse," that is in rhymed, metreless doggerel. It is impossible to date (except the use of rhyme there is no formal evidence pointing to a date later than 1670–80), and is unique in kind. It is written in a simple vernacular style with constant parallelism, or reduplication, and to a certain ex-

tent is akin to popular poetry. The narrator is a woman, and the story is conducted in the first person. It is the tale of her relations with her lover and with her unloved husband, in a drab and ordinary setting of everyday life. Some passages are of a very outspoken, coarse, but not in the least cynical, realism. There is an unsweetened directness and sense of tragedy in the narrative, which makes one think of some nineteenth-century realist, like Pisemsky or Maupassant.

Soon after the death of Peter the Great Russian literature finally becomes modern and western. But the new, French-bred literature was confined to the upper classes, and the people remained more or less aloof from it. The later eighteenth century produced a popular literature, distinct both from the literature of the upper classes, and from the unwritten folk poetry. It catered for the lower middle and lower urban classes and was a direct continuation of the literature of the age of Peter.

When, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the printing-press became an accessible and universal means of expression, numerous books and inscribed woodcuts began to be published for popular consumption. The publication of popular literature continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but its really interesting period is the second half of the eighteenth. Many, perhaps most, of these popular publications were books of edification—mainly lives of saints. But they are of little interest, being merely more or less modernized and vulgarized reproductions of older versions from the *Prologue*, or the official Menologion. More interesting are the secular stories. *Eruslan, Bova, Apollon of Tyre,* and several translated romances of the late seventeenth century were first printed soon after 1750, and constantly reprinted. Of original productions that may be assigned to the second half of the eighteenth century the most remarkable is the story of the famous robber, and afterwards police agent, *Vanka Kain* (Jack Cain). The story is told in the first person. It is an original specimen of the Russian picaresque imagination. Its style is a mixture of rhymed doggerel, cruel jokes, crude puns, and cynically roguish paraphrase and circumlocution. It

was exceedingly popular: fifteen editions of it appeared in the last third of the eighteenth century.

Alongside of the narrative chap-books, a curious *genre* of this plebeian literature, are the explanatory rhymed inscriptions that appear on the cheap woodcuts (*lubóchnye kartiny*, or *lubkì*) published for popular circulation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In style they are clearly related to the cries of the showmen at the open-air shows, that were such a prominent feature of the Russian town life of that time, and which are themselves closely connected with the Great Russian popular theatre. Like the woodcuts they accompany, the inscriptions employ a very rude and primitive technique, of rhymed, metreless doggerel. They cover a great variety of subjects. Their ultimate source usually goes back to some book of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Fairy-tale and novelistic subjects are particularly frequent. In the course of time the censorship learned to keep a watchful eye on the productions of this branch of the printing trade, but interesting satirical and political prints have come down to us from the earlier times. The best known and most interesting of these is the famous picture of *The Mice Burying the Cat*. Though with the lapse of time its satirical meaning was lost, and it continued popular merely as an amusing bit of fun, it is in substance a savage satire on the death of Peter the Great. It reflects the feelings of the Old Believers and other enemies of the great tyrant, the exultation of the oppressed and martyred mice at the end of their persecutor.

CHAPTER III

THE AGE OF CLASSICISM

1. CANTEMIR AND TREDIAKOVSKY

MODERN Russian literature dates from the establishment of a continuous tradition of secular imaginative literature in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The adoption of the standards of French classicism by four men born in the reign of Peter, and their variously successful attempts to transpose these standards into Russian and to produce original work in agreement with them, are the starting point of all subsequent literary development. The four men were Cantemir, Trediakovsky, Lomonosov, and Sumarokov.

Prince Antioch Cantemir (1708–1744) was the son of Demetrius Cantemir, Hospodar of Moldavia, who had been deposed by the Turks for siding with the Russians during the war of 1711. He retired to Russia, where he was given large estates and became one of the wealthiest Russian nobles. Demetrius Cantemir was a man of great culture, and the author of many books in Latin, including a history of the Turks which remained for over a century the standard work on the subject. Antioch Cantemir received a brilliant education and at the age of 22 was probably the most cultured man in Russia. During the political crisis of 1730 he was one of the leaders of the anti-oligarchic party and, together with Theophan Prokopovich and the historian Tatishchev, persuaded the Empress Anne to cancel the constitution she had sworn to observe. In the same year Cantemir was appointed Minister-Resident to London. In 1736 he was transferred to Paris, where he remained Russian Minister till his death, in 1744. During his residence in Paris he kept up intimate relations

with many eminent French men of letters, including Fontenelle and Montesquieu.

His literary work is contained in his satires, written between 1729 and 1739. They remained in manuscript till long after his death, and when they were at last published (1762),* it was too late for them to exercise any influence on the development of Russian Literature, for the "syllabic" metre and the language they were written in had become antiquated, owing to the new standards set up by Lomonosov. Cantemir's style is Latin rather than French. In spite of the use of rhyme his verse produces an effect closely similar to that of the hexameter of Horace. His language is racy and colloquial, considerably less bookish and Slavonic than that which was to triumph owing to Lomonosov. His painting of life is vigorous, and, though he adheres to the main lines of the classic tradition, his characters are living types, taken from the thick of contemporary Russian life. Cantemir has every right to be regarded as the first deliberate and artistically conscious realist in Russian literature. The edge of his satire is directed against the enemies of enlightenment, the unfaithful successors of Peter's work, the old prejudices of Muscovy, and the new foppishness of the semi-educated, Europeanized young nobles.

Very different were the career and the work of Vasili Kirilovich Trediakóvsky (1703–1769). He was the son of a poor priest of Astrakhan. There is an anecdote that, passing through that city, Peter the Great saw the boy and, patting him on the head, called him a "lifelong drudge," a prophecy which sums up the whole career of Trediakovsky.

Trediakovsky was the first non-noble Russian to receive a humanistic education abroad, and that at the very source of European culture, in Paris. He acquired a perfect knowledge of French and learned to compose fugitive verses in that language that were not beneath the accepted level. On his return to Russia, in 1730, he was appointed secretary to the Academy. One of his duties in this post was to compose complimentary odes and panegyrics on various occasions, and solemn orations in Russian and in Latin. There are innumerable patheti-

* Before that date a French version of them appeared in London (1750).

cally humiliating anecdotes reflecting his lack of dignity in his relations with the arrogant and haughty nobles of his time, who regarded the professional poet and orator as an inferior kind of domestic servant. His numerous translations are extraordinarily clumsy. His verse is devoid of all poetical merits, and long before his death began to seem unreadable. His principal work, a translation in hexameters of Fénélon's *Télémaque* (1766), as soon as it appeared became a byword for all that is pedantic and ugly. He passed into history as a despicable and ludicrous figure.

The indefatigable industry of the "lifelong drudge" commands a certain degree of respect. But Trediakovsky's principal claim to recognition as an important figure in Russian literary history is his work as a theoretician of poetry and of prosody. His *View of the Origin of Poetry and of Verse* is the first statement in Russian of the classical theory of imitation. Still more important are his works on Russian prosody. Though the legend of his having been the first to introduce regular accentual feet into Russian verse has been proved to be based on insufficient knowledge, his theoretical views were not only remarkable for their time, but are interesting even to-day.

2. LOMONOSOV

Cantemir and Trediakovsky were precursors. The real founder of modern Russian literature, and of modern Russian culture was a greater man than either of them—Mikhaylo Vasilievich Lomonósov. Born between 1708 and 1715 (there is conflicting evidence as to the exact date), Lomonsov was the son of a "peasant" of Kholmogory (south of Archangel), a deep-sea fisherman by trade. Much of his boyhood was spent on his father's boat, in the White Sea and Arctic Ocean, where they used to go as far as the Murman coast and as Nova Zembla. The boy was early taught the use of Slavonic letters. His father did not countenance his insatiable thirst for further knowledge, but in the winter of 1730–1 he left the paternal house, and went to Moscow, where he was entered a student

of the Slavo-Greco-Latin Academy. He got no support from his father, but he persevered, urged by a boundless passion for knowledge. In 1736 he was one of twelve travelling scholars sent to Germany to complete their education. He went to Marburg, where he studied philosophy, physics, and chemistry, under the famous Christian Wolff, and afterwards to Freiburg in Saxony, where he learned practical mining. It was from Germany that he sent to the Academy of St. Petersburg an *Ode on the Taking of Khotin* (1739), the first Russian poem written in what has since become our classical prosody. In 1741 Lomonosov returned to Russia, and was appointed Assistant Professor of Chemistry at the Academy of Science. His connection with the Academy, of which he became the virtual head in 1758, continued till his death. From the outset Lomonosov gave proof of an extraordinary working capacity, and an incredible range of interest and knowledge. He worked simultaneously at the most heterogeneous and disconnected subjects. Chemistry, physics, mathematics, mining, the making of mosaics, grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and history were among his principal occupations, and in all of them except history and mosaics he produced work of lasting value. At the same time he worked at the reorganization of the Academy, and actively combated the "German party," whose policy it was to make the Russian Academy a snug home for unemployed German *Litteraten*. Worn out by his toils, and by endless strife with the Germans and with unsympathetic ministers, he became addicted to drink; and in his last years he was little better than a ruin of his former self. He died in 1765.

Two passions reigned in Lomonosov: patriotism and the love of science. To create a Russian science and a Russian literature worthy to rival those of the West was his one dream. His upright, unbending character and his firm sense of dignity won him universal esteem, in an age when birth and power were as a rule the only claim to esteem. Even the haughtiest of the Elizabethan courtiers instinctively felt his superiority, and realized that he was not to be bullied. His hostility to the Academic Germans and his patriotism never prevented him

from recognizing the achievement of German scientists. When the physicist Richmann lost his life in the course of experimenting in electricity, Lomonosov used all his influence to save from poverty the widow and children of this martyr of science. The letter he wrote on the occasion to the minister Schouvalow is one of the noblest expressions of his faith in the nobility of science. Lomonosov's vocation was to be a scientist. His achievement in physics and chemistry are important, and he is regarded to-day as an advanced precursor of the methods of physical chemistry. But the great variety of his occupations prevented him from achieving as much as he might have achieved. In his lifetime only the most advanced minds, like the great mathematician Euler, were able to gauge the full extent of his scientific genius. To the great majority of his contemporaries he was primarily a poet and an orator. Since then the situation has been reversed, and in the later nineteenth century it became the fashion to praise the scientist at the expense of the poet. No one will question to-day the greatness of the former, but in a history of literature we are concerned with the man of letters and the poet rather than with the physicist. And we are in a position to give him better justice than was given him in the nineteenth century.

In literature Lomonosov was first of all a legislator. He fixed the standards of the literary language, and he introduced a new system of prosody, which, in spite of numerous revolutionary attempts to dislodge it, still rules the greater part of Russian poetry.

Church Slavonic had ceased to be the language of secular literature before Lomonosov's time, but literary Russian was still in a state of standardless chaos. It had freely borrowed from the older idiom, for to become a literary language it could not afford to go without the rich abstract and intellectual vocabulary, or the complex syntax that Church Slavonic had borrowed from Greek. But the fusion of the Russian and Slavonic element was incomplete and unsettled. It was Lomonosov's task to find a *modus vivendi* for the two, and to give a fixed form to the new literary language.

Lomonosov's linguistic reform is contained in his practice as

poet and prose writer, and in his legislative writings, which include a *Rhetoric*, a *Russian Grammar* and a remarkable essay *On the Use of Sacred Books in the Russian Tongue*. It is impossible to give an exact idea of the nature of his reform without entering into details that would be out of place in a literary history intended for a non-Russian public. Suffice it to say that Lomonosov made the best use of the great lexical and grammatical wealth of Church Slavonic, thus to a certain extent repeating the work done in the western languages by the humanistic scholars who enriched French and Italian and English by the infusion of Latin blood. The solution given by Lomonosov to the problem has since been modified, but the essentials have survived, and Lomonosov's Russian is in many ways nearer to ours than it is to the language of his immediate predecessors. An important feature of his linguistic legislation is his—characteristically classicist—doctrine of the three styles of diction—"high," "middle," and "low." They were to be distinguished chiefly by the relative abundance of Slavonic elements. Where there were two words, Slavonic and vernacular, to denote the same thing, the Slavonic was to be preferred in the "high" style, while none but strictly colloquial expressions were to be used in the "low."

Lomonosov's language has, no doubt, become antiquated. This is due first of all to the evolution of the colloquial language, and it is often precisely his boldest colloquialisms that seem to us most antiquated. Slavonic doublets of many Russian words have also gradually been dropped, though they survived in poetry long after the fall of classicism. It is, however, in syntax that Lomonosov's Russian has least survived. Besides (like Cantemir) using at times a freedom in the disposition of words that has since been curtailed, Lomonosov's syntax bears the traces of an excessive influence of Latin and German construction. Hence his partiality for excessively long periods, and his characteristic mannerism of finishing his sentences with a verb. Nevertheless his importance as the legislator and actual *founder* of the literary language of modern Russia cannot be exaggerated.

Lomonosov's metrical reform consisted in the introduction,

instead of the old syllabic prosody, of a system based on equisyllabic and accentual feet. * The system was to a large extent an adaptation of the prosody that was introduced into German by Opitz and further perfected by Fleming, Gryphius, and Lomonosov's immediate model, Günther. As a prosodist Lomonosov was inferior to Trediakovsky and to Sumarokov. He produced no good theory to justify his reform. But the force of his example, of his own poetical practice, carried all opposition before it. His "mighty line" set up a standard of verse that was better than any theory, and his dogmatic rules became the law of Russian poetry.

In the second half of the nineteenth century it was the fashion to belittle Lomonosov's poetry and even to deny him the title of poet. But the eighteenth century regarded him as a great poet, not only as a "Russian Malherbe," but as a "Russian Pindar"—and we are not very far from reverting to this view. Like a true classicist he rigorously distinguished between the various kinds of poetry, and the style of his didactic epistles is different from that of his odes. In the former he writes a very pure Russian, and though he submits to the eighteenth-century fashion of paraphrase, he conveys his idea with almost scientific precision. The famous epistle *On the Uses of Glass*, ridiculed by the nineteenth century for its prosaic subject, might easily be used as a chapter from a text-book, so exact is its language. His principal poetical works are, however, his odes, sacred and panegyrical. They are not the expression of individual experience, but the ideal voicing of the sentiments and aspirations of a nation, or at least of its intellectual *élite*. The panegyrical odes are devoted to the praise of Peter the Great, as Russia's "culture hero," and of his daughter Elizabeth for continuing her father's work, neglected by his first successors. They sing the glory of Russian armies and the greatness of the Empire, but above all the praise of science, of learning, and of industry. They call on Russia to produce "her own Platos and quick-witted Newtons" that she may eclipse her western teachers. But Lo-

* In Russian the system is called "tonic," a term that has little to justify it.

monosov's highest range as a poet is attained in the sacred odes. They are inspired by the rationalistic conception of a legislating God, who manifests himself in the grand, immovable laws of nature. The two *Meditations on the Divine Majesty* are especially fine examples of Lomonosov's philosophic poetry —and of his power to evoke, in grand and broad strokes, the solemn and majestic aspects of nature. But the finest example of his eloquence, of his "mighty line," and of his "curious felicity" of diction, is the admirable *Ode, selected from Job, Chapters xxxviii–xli*, where the Jealous God of the Old Testament is with convincing vigour transformed into a Leibnitzian Legislator of the universe.

3. NARRATIVE AND LYRICAL POETRY AFTER LOMONOSOV

If Lomonosov was the father of modern Russian civilization, the father of the Russian literary profession was Alexander Petrovich Sumarókov (1717–1774). Born in Moscow of a good family of Muscovite gentry, he was educated at the Cadet School in Petersburg, where he acquired a complete knowledge of French and an intimate familiarity with French polite learning. Sumarokov was neither an aristocratic dilettante like Cantemir, nor a learned professor like Trediakovsky and Lomonosov, but a gentleman who had, the first in Russia, chosen the profession of letters. He wrote much and regularly, chiefly in those literary kinds that had been neglected by Lomonosov. His principal importance rests in his dramatic work, but his non-dramatic work is by no means negligible. His fables are the first attempt in a *genre* that was destined to flourish in Russia with particular vigour. His satires, in which he occasionally imitates the manner of popular poetry, are racy and witty attacks against the arch-enemies of his class— the government clerks and the officers of law. His songs are of all his writings those which still can be expected to attract the poetical reader. They are remarkable for a truly prodigious metrical inventiveness (which was not so much as imitated by any of his successors) and a genuine gift of melody.

In subject-matter they are entirely within the pale of classical, conventional love poetry.

Sumarokov was also a pioneer in journalism (he edited *Monthly Compositions*, 1759–64) and in literary criticism. His criticism is usually carping and superficial, but it did much to inculcate upon the Russian public the canons of classical taste. He was a loyal follower of Voltaire, with whom he prided himself on having exchanged several letters. He used Voltaire's authority in combating the abominations of sentimental taste that began to insinuate themselves into Russia towards the end of his life in the form of the English sentimental drama. Vain and self-conscious, Sumarokov had an exceedingly high opinion of himself, and considered himself a Russian Racine and Voltaire in one. In personal relations he was irritable, touchy, and often petty. But this irritability and exacting touchiness contributed, almost as much as did Lomonosov's calm dignity, to raise the profession of the pen and to give it a definite place in society.

Lomonosov and Sumarokov inaugurated the reign of classicism and established the undisputable authority of "one Boileau," and of his heir on the critical throne—Voltaire. Poetry became, of course, the principal field for literary ambition. It was strictly divided into immutably established kinds, each of which had its prescribed forms, its style, and its metre. Individual poets might write in more than one, or in every one of these kinds, but they might not mix them. The kinds were unequal in importance and dignity, and were classified as high, middle, and low. The high kinds were tragedy, the epic, and the solemn ode. On a lower level stood the Horatian ode, the song, the satire, the tale in verse (as canonized by La Fontaine), the fable, and the burlesque.

The epic was regarded as the highest form of poetry, and a literature could not pretend to independent importance unless it had produced a national epic. Lomonosov had attempted an epic on Peter the Great, but left it barely begun. Michael Kheráskov (1733–1807), a gentleman of Moldavian origin, a pietist, a freemason, for many years Curator of the University

of Moscow, and one of the most enlightened and universally respected men of the century, renewed the attempt at a national epic. He wrote two vast narrative poems *Rossiada* (1779) and *Vladimir* (1785). The first had for its subject the taking of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible; the second, the introduction of Christianity by St. Vladimir. Their style is modelled on Voltaire's *Henriade*. *Rossiada* is inspired by patriotic hero-worship. In *Vladimir* the author's pietistic and mystical tendencies come to the forefront. Both poems, especially the *Rossiada*, were very popular, and Kheraskov was for a time regarded as the "Russian Homer." He was one of the first poets of the eighteenth century to be rejected by the nineteenth, but readers of Aksakov will remember with what enthusiasm he recited passages from Kheraskov when a small boy in the late seventeen-nineties.

The ode in Elizabeth's and Catherine's Russia was an important institution. There was a constant demand for odes at court, and ode writing brought more real and tangible results in the form of pensions and honours than any other kind of literary exercise. The average level of ode writing was naturally low. With the solitary exception of Derzhavin, all the ode writers of the time of Catherine were more or less unoriginal imitators of Lomonosov. The most famous of them was Vasili Petróv (1733–1801), whose rise from humble station to high administrative posts was entirely due to the favour his odes found at court. Petrov lived for many years in England, and was an admirer and translator of Pope. A more pleasing and accomplished poet was Derzhavin's brother-in-law, Vasili Kapníst (1757–1823), an Ukrainian gentleman and the author of a famous satirical comedy, which will be dealt with in due course. He was the most polished and elegant poet of his time, and excelled chiefly in the Horatian ode, a "middle" kind of poetry that stands half-way between the real ode and the frankly frivolous song.

Of the narrative kinds other than the regular epic two of the most popular, the fable and the tale in verse, had for their origin the amiable genius of La Fontaine. The fable after Sumarokov was brilliantly represented by Ivan Ivanovich

Khemnítser (Chemnitzer, 1744–1784), an intimate friend of Derzhavin and the first Russian fabulist to sound an original note. His fables have in them something more than a foretaste of Krylov. They are written in an admirable, vigorous, popular language. Some of them are among the few eighteenth-century poems that have continued popular (universally popular) ever since. The best known is *The Metaphysician*, an amusing satire of a young scholar fresh from the Academy falling into a ditch and, when his father wants to help him out of it with the aid of a rope, refusing to use the rope before he has thoroughly investigated its metaphysical properties. After which the sensible father loses patience and leaves him to philosophize alone in his ditch.

The other La Fontainian *genre* is represented by Ippolit Bogdanóvich (1742–1803), like Kapnist an Ukrainian gentleman. In 1775 he took the reading public by storm with his poem *Dushenka*. This is an adaptation of the French poet's *Psyché et Cupidon*. For half a century *Dushenka* was regarded as an exquisite masterpiece of light poetry.

The "lowermost" forms of narrative poetry were the mock-heroic poem and the burlesque. The former flourished in the hands of Vasili Máykov (1728–1778), whose *Elisey, or Bacchus Infuriated* (1769) was the favourite comic reading of two generations of Russian readers. It abounds in crude, but virile, realism, and is, next to Khemnitser's fables, the best piece of unsweetened, colloquial Russian of its time. The burlesque produced several travesties of the *Æneid*, one of which is of special interest and considerable historical importance. This is the Little-Russian *Æneid* of Kotlyarevsky (1798)—the starting-point of modern Ukrainian literature.

4. DERZHAVIN

Towering above the respectable and derivative mediocrity of all these verse writers stands the greatest poet of the century, one of the greatest and most original of all Russian poets—Gavrila Romanovich Derzhávin. He was born in 1743 of a family of small squires of the Province of Kazan, and

was educated at the high school of that city. He acquired there a knowledge of German, but not of French or Latin. From school Derzhavin went to Petersburg, where he entered the service as a private in the footguards. Having no powerful protectors, he rose but slowly to officer's rank. In 1773 the Pugachev rebellion found him on leave of absence in Kazan, where he attracted the attention of persons in power by writing for the nobility of the province an address with expressions of loyalty to the Empress. He became A. D. C. to General Bibikov, and on the suppression of the rebellion was given promotion, and lands in the newly annexed White Russia. In 1777 he returned to Petersburg and entered the Civil Service in one of the governmental offices. It was only now that he began seriously to devote himself to poetry. By 1780 Derzhavin was enjoying a considerable reputation as a poet. The reputation grew into a boom in 1782, when there appeared one after another *Felitsa*, a semi-humorous ode to Catherine, and the famous *Ode to God*. In the former Derzhavin extolled the virtues of the Empress, and satirized the vices of her principal courtiers. It brought him Catherine's particular favour. When, shortly after its publication, Derzhavin quarrelled with his superior and had to leave his office, he was immediately given a higher post and appointed Governor of Olonets. But there again he quarrelled with his associate governor and on being transferred to the governorship of Tambov, quarrelled again. In 1792 he was appointed Secretary to the Empress for the reception of petitions, but he did not get on with her, and when, after Catherine's death, Paul tried to employ him in a similar capacity, he found the poet equally difficult to agree with. Alexander I in 1802 made a last attempt to make use of the great poet as an administrator and appointed him Minister of Justice. But the liberal spirit of the young Emperor's administration was against the grain of the old poet, who was an outspoken reactionary, and the experiment did not last more than a year. In 1803 Derzhavin left the Civil Service and settled down to enjoy life in his recently acquired estate of Zvanka, in the province of Novgorod. His spacious, epicurean, and philosophically quiet life at

Zvanka is described with great verve in one of the most charming poems of his old age, *To Eugene, Life at Zvanka* (1807). During his last years Derzhavin's lyrical genius remained almost undiminished and he died in 1816, pen in hand; his last lines, the splendid opening stanza of an *Ode on Mortality*, had just been jotted down on a slate.

Derzhavin's work is almost exclusively lyrical. His tragedies, written in his later years, are negligible. His writings in prose are more important. His *Essay on Lyrical Poetry* is a remarkable piece of uninformed, but inspired, criticism. The commentary he wrote to his poems is full of delightfully quaint and illuminating details. His *Memoirs* give a very convincing picture of his obstinate and contrary character. His prose is rapid and nervous—quite free from the pedantic involutions of German-Latin rhetoric—next to Suvorov's the most personal and virile prose of the century.

His lyrical poetry is great. For sheer imaginative power he is one of the small number of Russia's greatest poets. The spirit of his poetry is classical, but it is the classicism of a barbarian. His philosophy is a joyous and avid epicureanism, which does not deny God, but admires Him quite disinterestedly. He accepts death and annihilation, with a manful thankfulness for the joys of ephemeral life. He combines in a curious way a high moral sentiment of justice and duty with the resolute and conscious decision to enjoy life to the full. He loved the sublime in all its forms: the metaphysical majesty of a deistic God, the physical grandness of a waterfall, the political greatness of the Empire, of its builders and warriors. Gogol was right when he called Derzhavin "the poet of greatness." But though all these features are essentially classical —Derzhavin was a barbarian, not only in his great love of material enjoyment, but also in his use of the language. "His genius," said Pushkin, "thought in Tartar, and knew no Russian grammar for want of time." His style is a continuous violence to the Russian tongue, an unceasing, vigorous, personal, virile, but often cruel, deformation of it. Like his great contemporary Suvorov, Derzhavin was not afraid of losses when the issue was victory. His greatest odes (as the famous

Waterfall) consist too often of isolated and giddy peaks of poetry rising over a chaotic wilderness of harsh commonplace.

The range of Derzhavin's poetry is very wide. He wrote sacred and panegyrical odes, anacreontic and Horatian lyrics, dithyrambs and cantatas, and even, in his later years, ballads. He was an audacious innovator, but his innovations conformed to the spirit of classicism. In his paraphrase of Horace's *Exegi Monumentum* he adduces as his principal claim to immortality the creation of a new *genre:* the humorous panegyrical ode. This bold mixture of the sublime with the realistic and the comic is a characteristic feature of Derzhavin's most popular odes, and it was largely owing to this novelty that he struck his contemporaries with such unwonted force. But apart from this innovation Derzhavin is also the greatest Russian poet in the orthodox classical manner: the most eloquent singer of the great immemorial commonplaces of poetry and universal experience. His greatest moral odes are the magnificent ode *On the Death of Prince Meshchersky*, than where the Horatian philosophy of *Carpe diem* was never worded with more biblical majesty; the short and vigorous paraphrase of Psalm lxxxii, against bad kings, which brought to the poet considerable unpleasantness after the French Revolution (the only way he could answer accusations was that "King David was not a Jacobin, so my poem can be disagreeable to no one"); and *The Nobleman*, a powerful invective against the great favourites of the eighteenth century, where a keen sarcasm goes hand in hand with a stern moral earnestness.

But what makes Derzhavin unique is his extraordinary power of conveying impressions of light and colour. He saw the world as a heap of precious stones, and metals, and fire. His greatest achievements in this line are the opening of the *Waterfall*, which is also the acme of his rhythmical power; the astounding *Peacock* (so wilfully spoiled at the end by a flat moral maxim); and the middle stanzas of *On the Return of Count Zubov from Persia* (which is, by the way, a striking example of Derzhavin's independence and contrariness: written in 1797, immediately after the accession of Paul, who notoriously hated the Zubovs, it was addressed to the brother of the late Empress's

last favourite). It is in such poems and passages that Derzhavin's genius reaches its most triumphant pinnacles. It is very hard to give an idea of them, their effect depends so largely on the extraordinary character of the words, the syntax, and above all the metrical divisions. His visual flashes and rhetorical eruptions make Derzhavin the poet *par excellence* of "purple patches."

A very peculiar division of Derzhavin's poetical work is the anacreontic poems of his later years (first collected in 1804). Here he lets loose his barbarian epicureanism and his passionate love of life. Of all Russian poets Derzhavin was alone in striking this note of joyous, sturdy, sane sensuality of a green old age. The poems are not inspired merely by sexual sensuality, but by an enormous love of life in all its forms. Such is the poem already mentioned on *Life in Zvanka;* the gastronomic-moralistic *Invitation to Dinner*, and the lines to Dmitriev on the gipsies. (Derzhavin was the first in the long run of great Russian writers—Pushkin, Grigoriev, Tolstoy, Leskov, Blok—who did homage to the intoxication of gipsy music and gipsy dancing.) But among the later anacreontic poems there are also other poems of wonderful sweetness and melodiousness, in which (as Derzhavin tells us in his commentary) he avoided "the letter *r*, to prove the great mellifluousness of the Russian language."

Derzhavin's poetry is a universe of amazing richness; its only drawback was that the great poet was of no use either as a master or as an example. He did not do anything to raise the level of literary taste, or to improve the literary language, and as for his poetical flights, it was obviously impossible to follow him into those giddy spheres.

5. THE DRAMA

The continuous history of the Russian drama and of the Russian theatre begins in the reign of Elizabeth. The first regular drama, written according to the French standards, was Sumarokov's tragedy of *Khorev*, acted before the Empress in 1747 by the young men of the Cadet School. The first

regular troupe of players was founded a few years later in the city of Yaroslavl (on the upper Volga) by a local merchant, Fedor Volkov (1729–1763). Elizabeth, who was a passionate lover of the theatre, heard of the Yaroslavl players and summoned them to Petersburg. They played before her in 1752 to her entire satisfaction. Sumarokov was also delighted by Volkov, and from their contact was born the first permanent theatre in Russia (1756). Sumarokov became its first director and Volkov its leading actor. As has more often than not been the case in Russia ever since, the actors of the eighteenth century were superior to its playwrights. The great name in the history of the Russian classical theatre is that of the tragic actor Dmitrevsky (1734–1821), one of Volkov's original cast. He assimilated the French grand style of tragical acting, and heads the list of great Russian actors.

The classical theatre rapidly became a popular institution. The educated and semi-educated, and even uneducated, classes of the time were fascinated and absorbed by the acting of classical actors in classical tragedies and comedies. It was no doubt the good acting that made the reputation of Sumarokov, as the literary value of his plays is small. His tragedies are a stultification of the classical method; their Alexandrine couplets are exceedingly harsh; their characters are marionettes. His comedies are adaptations of French plays, with a feeble sprinkling of Russian traits. Their dialogue is a stilted prose, that had never been spoken by anyone and reeked of translation.

After Sumarokov, tragedy made little progress except in the fluency and elegance of the Alexandrine couplet. The principal tragic author of the age of Catherine was Sumarokov's son-in-law, Yakov B. Knyazhnín (1742–1793), an imitator of Voltaire. Some of his most interesting tragedies (e. g., *Vadim*, 1789) breathe an almost revolutionary spirit of political free-thinking.

Comedy was a much liver business and, after Sumarokov, made great strides towards a firmer grasp of the material of Russian life.

The most remarkable playwright of the age was Denis Ivan-

ovich Fonvízin.* Born in 1744 in Moscow of a family of gentry, he received a good education at the University of Moscow and very early began writing and translating. After completing his studies he entered the Civil Service, became secretary to Count Panin, one of the great noblemen of the reign, and in 1766 wrote the first of his two famous comedies, *The Brigadier-General.* He was a man of means and mixed with the best company of the capital. He was always a dilettante rather than a professional author, though he became a prominent figure in literary and intellectual circles. In 1777–8 he travelled abroad, the principal aim of his journey being the medical faculty of Montpellier. He described his voyage in his *Letters from France.* They are one of the most elegant specimens of the prose of the period, and the most striking document of that anti-French nationalism which in the Russian *élite* of the time of Catherine went hand in hand with a complete dependence on French literary taste. In 1782 appeared Fonvizin's second and best comedy *The Minor* (*Nedorosl*), which definitely classed him as the foremost of Russian playwrights. His last years were passed in constant suffering and travelling abroad for his health. He died in 1792.

Fonvizin's reputation rests almost entirely on his two comedies, which are beyond doubt the best Russian plays before Griboyedov. They are both in prose and adhere to the canons of classical comedy. Fonvizin's principal model, however, was not Molière, but the great Danish playwright Holberg, whom he read in German, and by translating some of whose plays he had begun his literary career. Both comedies are plays of social satire with definite axes to grind. *The Brigadier-General* is a satire against the fashionable French semi-education of the "*petits-maîtres.*" It is full of excellent fun, and though less serious than *The Minor*, it is better constructed. But *The Minor*, though imperfect from the point of view of dramatic construction, is a more remarkable work and justly considered Fonvizin's masterpiece. As is the rule with Russian classical

* There is no reason for spelling his name *von Wiesen.* Probably, though by no means certainly, it was of German origin, but we have no knowledge of its exact German form. Its oldest Russian spelling is *Fanfisin.*

comedies, it contains a pair of virtuous lovers, Milon and Sofia, who are uninteresting and conventional. All the interest is concentrated in the vicious personages: the Prostakov family and their surroundings. The point of the satire is directed against the brutish and selfish crudeness and barbarity of the uneducated country gentry. The satirized characters are admirably portrayed. Madam Prostakov is a domineering bully with only one human feeling—her love for her sixteen-year-old son Mitrophan, whom she persists in calling "the child." Her maternal affection is of a purely animal and material nature: her one desire is that Mitrophan should eat his fill, that he should not catch cold, that he should not be bothered by any duties or obligations, and might marry an heiress. Then comes her brother Skotinin (Mr. Brute) who confesses to a greater family feeling for pigs than for human beings; her sheepish husband, Prostakov (Mr. Simpleton); the nurse, doting on her "baby," who is only capable of bullying her; at last the hero himself, the famous Mitrophan. He is the accomplished type of vulgar and brutal selfishness, unredeemed by a single human feature—even his fondly doting mother gets nothing from him for her pains. All these personages are masterpieces of character drawing—a worthy introduction to the great portrait gallery of Russian fiction. The dialogue of the vicious characters is wonderful—true to life, and finely individualized. But the virtuous personages, the two lovers and their two virtuous uncles, are marionettes from cautionary tales, incarnate virtue and honour, who talk a stilted and bookish language that certainly does not help us to sympathize with virtue when we hear it next to the splendidly real speech of the wicked Prostakovs.

Fonvizin is superior to all his contemporaries in the art of character drawing and of comical dialogue. But he is surrounded by a galaxy of comic playwrights of very respectable talent. The number of good comedies in the last third of the eighteenth century is quite considerable. Their fresh realism presents a lively picture-gallery of the times. The most prolific playwright was Knyazhnin, whose comedies are better than his tragedies. They are mostly in verse, and though for char-

acter drawing and dialogue they cannot rival Fonvizin's, they are often superior from the point of view of stagecraft. One of the best is *An Accident with a Carriage*, a satire of serfdom, that is bolder if less serious than Fonvizin's. Another notable dramatist was Michael Matinsky, a serf by birth, whose comedy *The Bazaar* (*Gostinoy Dvor*, 1787) is a very vigorous satire upon the government clerks and their thievish ways. It is in prose, and partly in dialect. But the most famous dramatic satire, next to Fonvizin's, was Kapnist's *Chicane* (*Yabeda*, 1798). In this comedy the amiable author of Horatian odes revealed himself a savage satirist. His victims are the judges and officers of law, whom he paints as an unredeemed lot of thieves and extortioners. It contains a famous chorus in which the judges and magistrates join at the end of a rowdy feast:

> Grab, it needs no great skill.
> Grab whatever you can.
> What are our hands attached to us for
> But to grab, grab, grab?

The play is in rather harsh Alexandrines and is full of outrages against the spirit of the Russian language, but it certainly produces a powerful effect by the force of its passionate sarcasm. Both the two greatest Russian comedies of the nineteenth century, Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit* and Gogol's *Revizor*, owe not a little to the crude and primitive comedy of Kapnist.

Closely connected with comedy, but less ambitious and less serious, was the comic opera, which had a great vogue in the late-eighteenth century. Its principal champion was Alexander Onisimovich Ablesimov (1742–1783), whose *The Miller Wizard, Quack and Matchmaker* (1799) was the greatest theatrical success of the whole century. It is a very lively and merry play, with excellent, sprightly popular dialogue and delightful, genuinely popular songs. Quite free from all social or moral preoccupation, full of unrestrained and purely Russian merriment, Ablesimov's is one of the masterpieces of Russian eighteenth-century literature.

6. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

The standards of the new literary prose * were set up by Lomonosov, and remained in force till the advent of Karamzin. Lomonosov's own practice was limited chiefly to the higher kinds—solemn eloquence and rhetorical history. Sumarokov in his periodicals was the first to cultivate the more everyday forms of prose. The age of Catherine saw a great extension in the use of prose, together with the spread of European and modern ideas.

Catherine herself was an author. In the early years of her reign she piqued herself on being one of the most advanced minds in Europe. She was in constant correspondence with Voltaire, Diderot, and Grimm and did her best to appear enlightened in the eyes of these leaders of European opinion. Her *Instruction* (*Nakaz*) to the Committee of Deputies convened in 1767 was based on the ideas of Montesquieu and Beccaria. It was so openly liberal that in France it was prohibited by the censorship, and a French translation of it could appear only in Neuchâtel. But before long, under the influence of the Pugachev Rebellion, Catherine's liberalism was greatly damped. In the end of her reign, under the influence of the French Revolution, she finally discarded all liberal pretence and became an overt reactionary. As a writer she is not devoid of merits, but her best is to be found in her French writings. French critics praise her French, which, though less correct than Frederick II's, is personal and vigorous. In her letters to Grimm she is on her best intellectual behaviour and tries to show off her na-

* Russian literary historians usually neglect all ecclesiastical literature after the age of Peter. But the eighteenth century produced an abundant harvest of sermons of a much more ambitious kind than was the rule in Old Russia. There was considerable mutual influence between secular and ecclesiastical literature, all the more so as the prelates of the age of Elizabeth and Catherine were more secular in outlook than their successors in the nineteenth century. The most celebrated preachers of the period were Gedeon Krinovsky, Bishop of Pskov (1726–1763), whose best-known sermon was preached against Voltaire, on the occasion of the latter's poem on the Lisbon earthquake; and Platon Levshin, Metropolitan of Moscow (1737–1812), the most typical representative of the Broad-Church mentality of the Age of Reason.

tive wit and cleverness. Her Russian writings, considering her German origin, are quite respectable. But neither her satirical papers, nor her comedies, nor her tales, nor her historical chronicles (very clumsily imitated from Shakespere), are in any way above mediocrity. On the strength of her correspondence with Grimm and of her remarkable Memoirs she has a higher place in French literature than she can be given in Russian.

It was Catherine herself who started, in 1769, the publication of satirical journals, after the model of the famous English papers. For four or five years (1769–74) this kind of journalism flourished in Russia, until it became too independent and was put an end to by the same Catherine. Most men of letters of the day took part in the movement. Its most brilliant representative was Nikolay Ivanovich Novikóv (1744–1816), one of the most remarkable men of the generation. He edited the *Drone* (1769–1770) and the *Painter* (1772–1773), both of which were, like most of the other journals, the almost exclusive work of the editor. But instead of making his papers, as his fellow journalists did, and as Catherine wanted them to do, a collection of harmless jokes at the expense of old-fashioned prejudice, he tried to make them the weapon of serious social satire. He aimed his blows at the very core of the society of the time—at the system of serfdom. In his polemics with Catherine's own magazine he dared to disagree with her opinion that satire should smile at foibles rather than chastise vices. It was precisely Novikov's witty and earnest attacks on serfdom that made Catherine put a stop to the whole lot of satirical journals. Novikov transferred his activities to another sphere. He started a publishing business, which he conducted in a highly public-spirited way, aiming, not at gain, but at the extension of enlightenment. From 1775 to 1789 his press turned out a greater number of books than had been printed in Russia since the beginning of printing. He may be said to have formed the Russian reading public. About the same time Novikov became a freemason—one of the most prominent and respected men of that sect. In his publications he gave occasional expression to his religious and moral views, and this was his undoing. He became one of the

first victims of the reaction caused in Catherine by the French Revolution. In 1791 his printing-press was seized and closed; and he himself was arrested and imprisoned in Schlüsselburg. He remained there till the accession of Paul, who liberated him, not so much from any liberal impulse, as from a desire to undo all his mother had done. Novikov never returned to active life, and spent his remaining years in the seclusion of his country place, devoting himself to mystical meditations. As a writer he is to be remembered for his satirical papers of 1769–73, and for a few stories. The most interesting of these is *The Novgorodian Girls' Wedding Eve*—an improved version of the old picaresque story of *Frol Skobeyev*.

About 1790 there was a shortlived revival of satirical journalism, but, as had happened twenty years earlier, the journals soon assumed an independent tone which caused the authorities to put an end to them. The principal part in this revival was played by the young Krylov, who was later to become the great fabulist.

Even at their boldest the satirical journals never touched on strictly political matters. But Catherine's own initiative in convening an elected Committee of Deputies in the beginning of her reign (1767), and the effect of the French Revolution in the end, gave rise to some purely political literature. Of the writers connected with the first of these impulses the most remarkable was Prince Michael Shcherbátov (1733–1790). He was an aristocrat and a conservative, one of the first enlightened Russians who began to condemn Peter the Great for introducing the corrupt morality of the West into the solid family life of Old Russia. His most interesting pamphlet is *On the Decline of Morals*, a lurid account of the misconduct of the eighteenth-century empresses and of their favourites. Shcherbatov also wrote a history of Russia, which is inferior from a literary point of view to his other writings, a mere ill-digested compilation of the Chronicles. A much more intelligent historian was I. N. Boltín (1735–1792), who has every right to be regarded as the father of Russian history. His *Notes* (1788) on the history of ancient and modern Russia of the Frenchman Leclerc are the first evidence of a critical his-

torical spirit in Russia, and a very notable achievement of critical scholarship.

The second great political stimulus of the reign—the French Revolution—found its expression in a famous book of political invective, *A Voyage from Petersburg to Moscow*, by Alexander Nicolaevich Radíshchev (1749–1802). Radishchev had been sent as a young man to complete his education at Leipzig, where he came under the influence of the more extreme of the French philosophers—Helvetius, Raynal, and Rousseau. On his return he quietly served in the Civil Service, and nothing predicted the development his career was to take. In 1790 he started a private press, and issued from it, without submitting it to the censorship, his famous *Voyage*. The style of the book is one of intense and unrelieved rhetoric, and its Russian is exceptionally heavy and clumsy. It is a furious attack against existing social and political conditions. The brunt of it was directed against serfdom, but it also contained expressions of anti-monarchic feeling, and of materialistic opinions. The book was immediately seized, its author arrested and exiled to East Siberia. He was released by Paul in 1796, and received back into the Civil Service with complete rehabilitation by Alexander I, in 1801. But during his exile he had become a victim to nervous melancholy, and in 1802 he committed suicide. He has come to be regarded by the radical intelligentsia as its first spokesman, and first martyr. The sincerity of his book has been questioned both by his early advocates and by his later detractors. It would seem that he wrote it merely out of literary ambition and that it is no more than a rhetorical exercise on a subject suggested and familiarized by Raynal. However this may be, the book, apart from its political importance, is devoid of literary merit. But Radishchev was also a poet of no mean talent. He held paradoxical views, preferring Trediakovsky to Lomonosov, and tried to introduce Greek measures into Russian prosody. A short love poem of his in the Sapphic metre is among the most charming lyrics of the century, and his elegy (in distichs) on *The Eighteenth Century* has both poetical power and intellectual substance.

The eighteenth century has left us an interesting series of

memoirs. First in time and, probably, in human interest came the Memoirs of Princess Nathalie Dolgorúky, *née* Countess Sheremetev (1714–1771). She was the *fiancée* of one of the oligarchs of the Dolgoruky family when the *coup d'état* of Anne (1730) restored autocracy and sent the Dolgorukys into exile. In spite of this she married the exile, and followed him through all his ordeals. After his execution she became a nun and in her old age wrote her life for her children and grandchildren. Its principal attraction, apart from the high moral character of the author, resides in the great simplicity and unpretentious sincerity of the narrative, and in its beautiful, undefiled Russian, such as could be written only by a gentlewoman who lived before the age of schoolmasters.

Of the later memoirists I have already spoken of Derzhavin. The memoirs of Bólotov (1738–1833) and of Danílov (1722–1790) are priceless documents for the social and moral history, and agreeable and interesting reading.

Private letters and even official correspondence of the eighteenth century are often of considerable literary interest. Non-literary men were as a rule more independent of grammar and of rhetoric than the men of letters, and wrote a more vigorous and personal Russian than the professional author. It is impossible to enlarge on this subject, but it is equally impossible to omit all mention of Field-marshal Suvórov, who was one of the most cultured and best informed men of his time. He gave much attention to the form of his private and official correspondence, and especially of his orders of the day. These latter are certainly among the most original productions of the age. They deliberately aim at unexpected and striking effect. Their style is a succession of nervous staccato sentences, which produce the effect of blows and flashes. Suvorov's official reports often assume a memorable and striking form.* His writings are as different from the common run of classical prose as his tactics were from those of Frederick or Marlborough. He was, in a sense, the first Russian romanticist—and in his old age his bed-side book was Ossian, in the

* One of Suvorov's rhymed reports is quoted, in a somewhat inaccurate form, by Byron in a note to *Don Juan*.

admirable Russian translation of Kostrov, dedicated to the great soldier.

7. KARAMZIN

The last years of Catherine's reign saw the beginning of a literary movement that is connected with the name of Karamzin. It was not a violent revolution. The spirit of the eighteenth century continued alive till much later, and the new movement was even to a large extent a further assertion of that spirit. The reform of the literary language, which was its most striking and immediately apparent aspect, was a direct continuation of the Europeanizing and secularizing reforms of Peter and Lomonosov. But, as Europe itself had changed since the first half of the century, the new wave of Europeanization brought with it new ideas and new tastes—the new sensibility of Richardson and Rousseau, and the first signs of the beginning revolt against classicism.

The main question at issue, however, was the question of language. Karamzin's object was to make literary Russian less like the old ecclesiastical languages, Slavonic and Latin, and more like French, the new language of polite society and secular knowledge. He exchanged the heavy German-Latin syntax introduced by Lomonosov for a more elegant French style. While ejecting hundreds of Slavonic words, Karamzin introduced numerous Gallicisms—exact translations from the French of words and expressions denoting ideas connected with the new sensibility, or with the advance of knowledge. His reform was a success, and was immediately accepted by the majority of writers. But it was by no means an unmixed blessing to the language. It did not make the literary idiom nearer to spoken Russian. It only substituted one foreign model for another. It even increased the distance between the written and the spoken language, for it did away (virtually) with Lomonosov's distinction of three styles by merging them all in the "middle" style, and practically abandoning the "low." It is doubtful whether the language has profited as much as it has been supposed by the exclusion of so many Slavonic syno-

nyms of Russian words: they added colour and variety. By reforming the language as he did, Karamzin contributed to widen the gap between the educated classes and the people, and between new and old Russia. The reform was anti-democratic (in this a true child of the eighteenth century) and anti-national (in this still more so). But whatever we may say against it, it was victorious, and facilitated the coming of an age of *classical* poetry: the ultimate justification of Karamzin's language is that it became the language of Pushkin.

Another aspect of the Karamzinian movement was the coming of the new sensibility. It had been prepared by the slow infiltration of sentimental novels, and by the emotional pietism of the freemasons. But the cult of feeling, the obedient submission to emotional impulses, the conception of virtue as the outcome of the natural goodness of man—all these were first explicitly preached by Karamzin.

Nikolay Mikhaylovich Karamzín was born in 1766 in Simbirsk (on the middle Volga) of a family of provincial gentry. He received a good secondary education at the private school of a German professor of the University of Moscow. After leaving school he was in danger of becoming a dissipated, pleasure-seeking young squire, when he met I. N. Turgenev, a prominent freemason, who led him away from the ways of vice, and introduced him to Novikov. These masonic influences had a principal part in framing Karamzin's mind. Their vaguely religious, sentimental, and cosmopolitan ideas paved the way to the understanding of Rousseau and Herder. Karamzin began to write for Novikov's publications. His first work to appear in book form was a translation of *Julius Cæsar* (1787). He also translated Thomson's *Seasons*. In 1789 Karamzin went abroad, where he remained for about eighteen months, travelling in Germany, Switzerland, France, and England. On his return to Moscow he started a monthly review, the *Moscow Journal* (1791–2), which marks the real beginning of the new movement. Most of the matter contained in it came from the editor's own pen. The most important of his contributions was *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, which were received by the public as something of a revelation: the revelation of a new,

enlightened, and cosmopolitan sensibility, and of a delightfully new style. Karamzin became a leader, the most important literary figure of his generation.

In the reign of Paul (1796–1801) the growing severity of the censorship forced him to silence. But the liberal beginning of the reign of Alexander I prompted him into renewed activity. In 1802 he started a new monthly, the *Messenger of Europe*, which was largely devoted to politics. It judged contemporary events from the point of view of a sentimentalized Plutarchian "Virtue," condemned Napoleon, and glorified Washington and Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1804 Karamzin gave up the editorship of his magazine, abandoned all literary work, and devoted himself to historical research.

It was in the years 1791–1804 that Karamzin produced all his literary work. Its intrinsic value does not to-day strike us as great. He was not a creative mind. He was an interpreter, a schoolmaster, an importer of foreign wealth. Besides being the most cultured mind, he was the most elegant writer of his age. The sweetness of his style was what struck his readers most of all. Never had Russian prose sought so much to enchant and fascinate the reader. Derzhavin, who later on joined the anti-Karamzin faction, was the first to greet with enthusiasm *The Letters of a Russian Traveller*. A complimentary poem by him wound up with the lines:

> Sing, Karamzin! Even in prose
> Your voice sounds like a nightingale's.

All Karamzin's early work is stamped with the mark of the New Sensibility. It is the work of a man who has first discovered in his feelings an infinite source of interest and pleasure. He announces the good news of Sensibility: that happiness consists in making the best use of our spontaneous impulses, and that to be happy we must have confidence in our feelings, for they are *natural*, and Nature is good. But Karamzin's Rousseauism is tempered by an innate mediocrity (in the unabusive Aristotelian sense of the term). An elegant moderation and a cultured urbanity are the constant characteristic of his writings. And to remind us that we are still up

to the ears in the eighteenth century, his sensibility is never divorced from a sound intellect that judges at least as keenly as it feels.

The subject of Karamzin's first and best-known tale, *Poor Liza* (1792), is the story of the seduced girl who is abandoned by her lover and commits suicide—a favourite theme of the sentimental age. The success of the story was immense. A pond in the environs of Moscow where Karamzin located Liza's suicide became for several years a favourite pilgrimage of the sentimental youths and ladies of Moscow. Karamzin was the first Russian author to give prose fiction a degree of attention and artistic finish that raised it to the rank of literature. But apart from this the merits of his tales and novels are small. His later stories, those written after 1800, *A Knight of Our Times*, and *The Sensitive Man and the Cold Man*, are superior to the rest, for they display a genuine originality of psychological observation and sentimental analysis.

Karamzin's poetry is imitative, but important, like the rest of his work, as the indication of a new period. He was the first in Russia for whom poetry was a means of expressing his "inner life." He also left a distinct trace on the technique of Russian verse, both by refining the traditional French verse forms, and by introducing new forms of Germanic origin. In all these respects, however, he was but the forerunner unworthy to loosen the shoe-strings of Zhukovsky, the real father of modern Russian poetry.

After 1804 Karamzin withdrew from literature and journalism, and lived in the quietness of archives, working at *The History of the Russian State*. His historical studies produced a profound change in his ideas. Though he retained his cult of virtue and feeling, he became imbued with patriotism and State-worship. He came to the conclusion that to be efficient the State must be strong, monarchic, and autocratic. His new views found expression in the memoir presented in 1811 to Alexander I's sister, the Duchess of Oldenburg, *On Ancient and Modern Russia*. It was aimed against the constitutional reforms of Speransky, then under discussion, and against all the liberal Francophil policy of that statesman. The memoir

(which was published only long after Karamzin's death) is remarkable for its outspoken criticism of the Russian monarchs of the eighteenth century, from Peter to Paul. From a literary point of view it is the writer's masterpiece—owing to the vigorous clarity of the argument, unblurred by rhetoric and sentimentality. It produced a strong impression on Alexander, and made its author a political influence to be counted with. In 1817 Karamzin came to Petersburg to supervise the printing of his *History*, the first eight volumes of which appeared in 1818. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh volumes appeared in the following years, while the twelfth (which brought the narrative down to 1612) remained incomplete and was published posthumously. Karamzin's residence at Petersburg brought him into closer contact with Alexander. The Emperor and the historian contracted a warm friendship. The death of Alexander (November, 1825) was a severe blow to Karamzin. He did not survive his royal friend very long and died in 1826. His reputation as the greatest writer of Russian prose and a great historian became a principal tenet of the official creed, and of all the conservative part of the literary world. Thus it was that, beginning as a reforming, almost revolutionary, force, Karamzin ended his career and passed into posterity as the symbol and most perfect embodiment of the official ideals of Imperial Russia.

The success of the *History of the Russian State* on its first appearance was immediate and universal. It had a record sale. The great majority of its readers accepted it as a definitive presentation of Russia's past. Even the liberal minority, who disliked its fundamental thesis of the all-efficiency of autocracy, were carried away by the literary charm of the narrative, and the novelty of the facts. Since then critical appreciation has changed, and to-day no one will revive the ecstasies of the reading public of 1818. Karamzin's historical outlook is narrow, and crippled by the essentially eighteenth-century character of his mind. He concentrated exclusively (or almost so) on the political actions of Russian sovereigns. The Russian people is practically overlooked and the oversight is emphasized by the title of the work—*The History of the Russian*

State (*Istoria Gosudarstva Rossiyskago*). The judgment he passes on the Russian sovereigns (for to persons below that rank he gives scant attention) is often sentimentally moralistic. The fundamental idea of the all-saving virtues of autocracy distorts his reading of the individual facts.

But these defects have their redeeming points. By forcing on the reader a consistent view of Russian history as a whole Karamzin helped to understand its essential unity. By taking a moralistic view of the behaviour of sovereigns he was able to condemn their selfish or tyrannical policies. By concentrating on the actions of princes he added dramatic value to his work: the parts that struck the readers' imagination most powerfully were precisely those stories of individual monarchs, founded no doubt on solid fact, but arranged and unified with the consummate skill of a dramatist. The most famous of these stories is that of Boris Godunov, which became the great tragical myth of Russian poetry, and produced the tragedy of Pushkin, and the popular drama of Musorgsky.

The style of the *History* is rhetorical and sustainedly eloquent. It is a compromise with the literary conservatives, who forgave Karamzin all his early sins for having written the *History*. But in the main it is a development of the essentially French eighteenth-century style of the younger Karamzin. It is abstract and sentimental. It avoids, or rather misses, all historical and local colour. The choice of words is calculated to universalize and humanize, not to individualize, Old Russia, and the monotonously rounded cadences convey an idea of the continuousness, but not of the complexity, of history. Contemporaries liked this style. A few critics found fault with its stiltedness and sentimentality, but on the whole the age was fascinated by it and recognized it as the greatest achievement of Russian prose.

8. CONTEMPORARIES OF KARAMZIN

Karamzin's early work met with a strong conservative opposition. Its principal leader was Admiral Alexander Semenovich Shishkov (1754–1843), a typical all-round conservative

and nationalist. He was an ardent patriot: in 1812 it was he who wrote the stirring manifesto issued on the invasion of Napoleon, and he was a principal influence in Alexander's decision to fight to the end. But above all he was the champion of the Greek and Slavonic Church tradition in the literary language. In his campaign against the Karamzinians Shishkov counted among his adherents such men as Derzhavin, Krylov, and in the younger generation Griboyedov, Katenin, and Küchelbecker, but the trend of the times was against him and he lost his battle. His linguistic writings, though often rather wildly dilettantish, are interesting for his great insight into the shades of meaning of words, for his pious, if uninformed, interest in Old Russian literature and folk-lore, and for the excellent Russian in which they are written.

The poets that followed the colours of Shishkov were rather a motley throng and cannot be all bracketed as one school. But what distinguished Shishkov's poetical followers from Karamzin's was that only the former continued and developed the eighteenth-century Russian tradition of high poetry. These votaries of the sublime were the favourite victims of the Karamzinian wits. The next generation did not read them and only remembered them for the witty epigrams levied at them by their enemies. But at least two poets of the Shishkovian party have greater intrinsic merit than any Karamzinian before Zhukovsky. These two are Semen Bobróv (1767–1810) and Prince Sergius (Shirinsky-) Shikhmátov (1783–1837). Bobrov's poetry is remarkable for its rich diction and splendid imagery; for the soaring flights of his imagination, and the genuine sublimity of his design. Shikhmatov's principal work is a patriotic "lyrical epic" in eight cantos, *Peter the Great* (1810). It is long and devoid of narrative (or metaphysical) interest. But its style is remarkable. Such a saturated and ornate style is not to be found in Russian poetry until we come to our contemporary Vyacheslav Ivanov.

Karamzin's following was more numerous than Shishkov's, and it occupies the highway of Russian literary tradition. But before we come to Zhukovsky and Batyushkov it is not strikingly rich in talent. The Karamzinian poets abandoned

the great themes and "high" style of the Russian eighteenth century, and devoted themselves to the cultivation of the lighter forms of poetry, of the *poésie légère* of the French eighteenth century. The most eminent of these poets was Ivan Ivanovich Dmítriev (1760–1837), a friend of Karamzin, and like him a native of Simbirsk. His chief ambition was to write verse in a style as polished and as elegant as that of Karamzin's prose. He wrote songs, odes, shorter and less ambitious than Derzhavin's or Lomonosov's, elegies, epigrams, fables, tales in verse in the manner of La Fontaine; and a famous satire on the bad ode-writers of the age (1795). All this verse is eminently elegant, but long before his death Dmitriev's elegance had become antiquated, and his poetry the quaint rococo toy of a hopelessly irrevertible past. Other poets of the Karamzinian coterie were Vasili Lvovich Púshkin (1770–1830), the uncle of a greater nephew, who wrote polished sentimental trifles—and a lively and amusing, but very coarse, burlesque, *A Dangerous Neighbour* (1811), which is the masterpiece of its kind; and A. F. Merzlyakóv (1778–1829), an eclectic follower of senescent classicism, who tried his hand in almost every kind of verse, but was particularly successful in his songs.

The vogue of songbooks is a prominent feature of the Karamzinian age. They contained folk-songs and literary songs. Most of the latter were anonymous, but several poets acquired a reputation owing to their songs. The most famous of these song-writers were Yuri Aleksandrovich Nelédinsky-Melétsky (1752–1828), Dmitriev, and Merzlyakov. Some of their songs are still universally sung and have become folk-songs. But the popular element in the songs of Neledinsky and of Dmitriev is superficial. Nor are they really subjective, emotional poetry; they are quite as conventional as the older songs of Sumarokov, except that the classical convention of sensual love has been replaced by a new sentimental convention, and the rhythmical variety of the older poet by an elegantly monotonous sing-song. Only Merzlyakov's songs are genuinely akin to folk-song. One or two of them are among the most universally popular of Russian songs. A more modern and subjective poetry was that of Gavrila Petrovich Kámenev (1772–1803), who

has been called the first Russian romanticist. He was the first Russian poet to follow Karamzin in making his poetry the expression of individual emotional experience. He cultivated the new "Germanic" and rhymeless forms of verse, and was under the strong influence of Ossian and of Young.

The new subjective poetry began to acquire a really sincere tone and efficient forms of expression only in the hands of the generation born after 1780, which introduces us to the Golden Age of poetry. The elegies of Andrey Turgenev (1781–1803), whose early death was a serious loss to Russian poetry, and the early work of Zhukovsky, whose translation of Gray's *Elegy* appeared in 1802, are the first swallows of the Golden Age. But the distinctive quality of that age begins first to be felt in the maturer work of Zhukovsky, from about 1808 onwards.

The Karamzinians were not alone in cultivating the lighter kinds of poetry. An original writer who did not belong to the Shishkov party, but was hostile to Karamzin, was Prince Ivan Mikhaylovich Dolgorúky (1764–1823), a grandson of Princess Nathalie Dolgoruky, whose charming memoirs I have already referred to. Garrulous and puerile at his worst, Dolgoruky is distinguished at his best by ease, raciness, and a well-bred naïveté. He tried to make common sense and the simple pleasures of domestic life the subject of his poetry. He studiously avoided all sentiment and sentimentality. His prose, especially that quaint alphabetical dictionary of his friends, *The Temple of My Heart*, has the same qualities as his verse, and is a good example of pure colloquial Russian, uncontaminated by foreign influence, or literary fashion.

The drama during the rule of Karamzin was not in any way affected by his admiration for Shakspere. The standards of French classicism were beginning to give way to a new taste, but what this new taste preferred was not Shakspere— it was the sentimental drama, or *comédie larmoyante*, that had begun to insinuate itself into Russia some twenty years earlier. The new style did not produce any original work of value and the Russian stage had to rely chiefly on the plays of the famous German melodramatist, Kotzebue.

The one outstanding dramatic author of the period, the "Karamzin of the stage," was the tragic poet Vladislav Alexandrovich Ózerov (1770–1816). His tragedies were produced between 1805 and 1811. Their success was tremendous, largely owing to the admirable acting of one of the greatest tragic actresses produced by the Russian stage, Catherine Semenova. Ozerov retained the classical forms (including the Alexandrine couplet), but attempted to infuse them with the new sensibility. This atmosphere of sensibility and the polished, Karamzinian sweetness of the verse was what the public liked in Ozerov's tragedies. Their success began with *Fingal* (1805), a sentimental tragedy with choruses in an Ossianic setting. The climax was reached in *Dimitri of the Don* (1807), which had for its subject the great victory of Kulikovo, and was full of patriotic eloquence; it was first acted during the second war with Napoleon, within a few days of the battle of Preussisch-Eylau (1807), when its patriotic tirades were received with overwhelming enthusiasm. Ozerov's last play, *Polyxene* (1811), did not meet with the same success, but intrinsically it is his best and no doubt the best Russian tragedy on the French classical model. The subject is handled in a broad and manly manner that makes the play genuinely evocative of the atmosphere of the Iliad.

9. KRYLOV

The age of Karamzin was the Golden Age of the Russian fable. The style of La Fontaine had been introduced into Russia by Sumarokov and substantially Russianized by Khemnitser. But in the end of the eighteenth and the first years of the nineteenth centuries fable writing became a veritable craze. Everyone who could put two rhymes together wrote fables. Even Zhukovsky, so essentially a stranger to the spirit of La Fontaine, wrote a number of fables in 1805–7.

The fable plays an important part in Russian literary development: it was one of the principal schools in which that realism which is the main feature of later Russian literature received its first training. A robust and open-eyed realism is

already the outstanding feature of the fables of Khemnitser. It is mellowed down, conventionalized, and gentilified in the drawing-room fables of Dmitriev. It regains all its vigour in the crude, but racy, picaresque fables of Alexander Izmáylov (1779–1831), and in the work of the greatest of Russian fabulists—Krylov.

Ivan Andreyevich Krylóv was born in 1768 and was the son of a poor army officer who had risen from the ranks. He received a very summary education, and was a small boy when he entered the Civil Service as a minor clerk. At the age of sixteen he succeeded in finding a post in Petersburg and the same year began his literary career with a comic opera. Afterwards Krylov turned to satirical journalism, and edited the *Spectator* (*Zritel*, 1792) and the *St. Petersburg Mercury* (1793). Among much inferior sentimental matter these journals contained several vigorous satirical essays in a manner very different from the sceptical common sense of the fables. The satire is Swiftian, keen, cruel, coldly passionate. The best of these papers is *A Panegyric of my Grandfather* (1792)—a tremendous caricature of a rude, selfish, savage, hunting country squire, who, like Fonvizin's Skotinin, has a greater family feeling for his hounds and horses than for his serfs. The *Mercury* was shortlived, being suppressed for the dangerously violent tone of Krylov's satire. For twelve years Krylov practically disappeared from literature. Part of this period he lived as a secretary, a tutor, or simply a parasite, in the houses of great noblemen, but for long periods he entirely escapes the eye of the biographer. At this new school of life Krylov seems to have lost his early violence and acquired the passive and complacently ironic shrewdness of the fables. In 1805 Krylov returned to literature; he wrote his first translation from La Fontaine and made a fresh attempt to conquer the stage: during the first wars with Napoleon he wrote two comedies satirizing the French fashions of the Russian ladies. Their success was considerable, but Krylov did not try to improve it, for he had found his right vein in the fable. In 1809 twenty-three of his fables were published in book form and had a success unprecedented in the annals of Russian literature. Hence-

forward he wrote nothing but fables. In 1810 he received a peaceful and commodious post (practically a sinecure) in the Public Library of St. Petersburg, where he remained for over thirty years. He died in 1844. He was noted for laziness, untidiness, good appetite, shrewd and malicious common sense. His fat, bulky figure was a familiar feature in the drawing-rooms of Petersburg, where he used to sit for whole evenings without opening his mouth, his little eyes half shut or gazing vacantly, sometimes dozing in his chair, with an air of boredom and indifference to all around him.

Krylov's *Fables* are contained in nine books. Most of them were written between 1810 and 1820: after that date his productivity sank, and he wrote only at rare intervals. The recognition given them was from the outset unanimous: except in the first few years his *Fables* met with no adverse criticism. They were equally admired by the most cultured of critics and the most illiterate of clowns. His *Fables* were in the nineteenth century the book that sold best, and the number of copies in circulation cannot be calculated, but certainly exceeds a million.

The enormous popularity of Krylov was due to both his matter and his manner. His outlook was representative of what is perhaps the typical outlook of a Great Russian of the lower or middle classes. It has a foundation of sound common sense. The virtues he respects above all things are efficiency and aptness. The vices he satirizes most readily are self-satisfied inaptitude and arrogant stupidity. Like the typical middle-class philosopher he is, Krylov has no faith in big words and high ideals. Intellectual ambition finds no sympathy with him. There is a vast amount of Philistine inertness and laziness in his philosophy of life. It is eminently conservative, and some of Krylov's most poisonous shafts were aimed at the fashionable progressive ideas of his time. But his common sense has no more patience with the absurdities and ineptitudes of the upper classes and of people in power. His satire is a smiling satire. His weapon is ridicule, not indignation, but it is keen and pointed and can make his victim smart.

Krylov is a great master of words, and this makes his place

in the pantheon of Russian literature impregnable. He did not from the outset achieve that mastery and that originality we now associate with his name. The 1809 volume contains several fables that are little more than good translations from La Fontaine. Among these is *The Two Pigeons*, one of his very few sentimental fables, that do not aim at either wit or humour. It is a charming poem for all that, full of exquisite, if somewhat old-fashioned, sentiment; two lines from it have been pronounced by Mr. Maurice Baring to be the most poetic couplet in the Russian language. But the greater part of the first book already displays his style at its best. Krylov was no friend of the reforming Karamzinians. He was a thorough classicist, a nationalist, and not averse to archaism. The descriptive and lyrical passages of the *Fables* are quite eighteenth century in tone. Even the raciness of his colloquial passages is different from the realism of such eighteenth-century writers as V. Maykov or Khemnitser, not so much in kind as in quality. But the quality is of the highest. Krylov most emphatically "had language." His words are alive. The line is tightly filled with them. And they are real, living words, words from the street and public-house, used in the true spirit of the *people's*, not of the schoolmaster's, Russian. Krylov is at his best in condensed epigrammatic statement. The pointed conclusions and morals of his *Fables* are the legitimate descendants of the popular proverb (no language is richer than Russian in the wealth and beauty of its proverbs), and hundreds of them have themselves become proverbs. They are now part of the language and pass from mouth to mouth without anyone's thinking of where they come from.

It is impossible to give any enumeration or classification to Krylov's fables. Some of the best are pointed against inefficiency and the pretensions of the unskilled man to do skilled work. Others are political pamphlets produced by current events, especially during the war of 1812–14. Several are satires against vain and importunate poetasters and criticasters, as for example the famous *Demian's Broth*. Others again are social satires, like the famous one of *The Geese*, who protested against being sold at the market, because they were

descended from the geese that had saved the Capitol from the Gauls.

Rather than enumerate them I will give an example in the admirable English rendering of Sir Bernard Pares. On the face of it Krylov is an untranslatable author, so much of his effect depends on the inimitable quality of his Russian. But Professor Pares has succeeded in finding wonderfully happy English equivalents for Krylov's raciest idioms. The fable that follows is one of Krylov's most characteristic thrusts at all kinds of inefficiency and ineptitude:

A QUARTET

The tricksome little monkey,
The goat with tangled hair,
The donkey,
And the clumsy-fingered bear
A great quartet had planned to start;
They got the notes, viola, fiddles, bass,
And sat beneath a lime-tree, on the grass,
To charm creation with their art.
They struck the sounding strings; what discord, oh, my heart!
"Stop, boys," cries little Monkey, "wait a bit;
It can't go right like that; you don't know how to sit!
You face viola, Bear, with your bassoon;
First fiddle faces second; then, you'll see,
We'll play to quite another tune
And make the hills and forest dance for glee."
They change their places, start again;
Yet all attempts at tune are vain.
"Here, stop!" says Donkey, "I'll explain.
I'm sure we'll make it go
By sitting in a row."
The donkey's plan they tried,
Of sitting side by side;
But did it answer? No.
Why, only all the worse they got entangled,
And all the more they wrangled,
Of where to sit and why.
Attracted by the noise, a nightingale came by.
To him they all appeal to show them what's the way:

"Have patience with us, please," they say,
"We're trying a quartet, which will not go a bit;
We've notes, we've instruments; do tell us how to sit!"
"To manage a quartet, you must know how to play,"
The nightingale replies: "To sit is not enough.
Besides, my friends, your ears are much too rough.
Then change your seats, and fiddles too:
Yet chamber music's not for you!"

10. THE NOVEL

Classical theory did not regard the novel on an equal footing with the drama and other forms of poetry. It took some time for the novel to become literature. No novels were printed in Russia till 1750. After that date translated fiction began to appear in increasing numbers, but the first original Russian novel was published only in 1763. For many years original novels remained both exceedingly rare, and considerably below the general level of literature. The Russian reader's demand for fiction was met by numerous translations of French, German, and English novels. The first Russian novelist, the most prolific for some time to come, was Fedor Emín (1735–1770), who wrote didactic and philosophical romances of adventure, in a florid and prolix literary prose.

A more realistic style that had been popularized by translations of Marivaux and of Fielding was taken up by Michael Chulkóv (1740–1793) in his novel *The Fair Cook, or the Adventures of a Debauched Woman* (1770), a sort of Russian *Moll Flanders*. This practically exhausts the list of *literary* novels before the time of Karamzin.

The example and success of Karamzin as a novelist provoked a somewhat increased output of prose fiction. But the direct imitators of Karamzin are negligible. The writings especially of Prince Shalikov (1768–1852) contributed more than anything to discredit "sensibility."

Robuster work was done by men unconnected with the movement. Alexander Benitzky (1781–1809), a thorough "Frenchman," but too sensible a Voltairian to imitate the sentimentalists, wrote philosophical oriental tales in the best tradition

of Voltaire. His style surpassed in elegance and lucidity everything written in Russian prose before Pushkin. The novel of manners is represented by *Eugene, or the Results of Bad Upbringing* (1798), an early work of the fabulist Alexander Izmaylov, a cautionary and moral story, where the author describes vice with such realistic gusto that his critics were inclined to doubt the sincerity of his moral purpose.

The most significant and the most prolific novelist of the period was Vasili Timifeevich Narézhny (1780–1825), a native of Ukraine. He was a robust and conscious realist in the tradition of Smollett, Fielding, and Le Sage. In his stories of Ukrainian life he was the first to present to the Russian reader a colourful, humorous, and realistic picture of Cossack and post-Cossack Ukraine, so much more memorably revived a generation later by Gogol. Narezhny's principal work is *A Russian Gil Blas*, a novel in six parts, three of which appeared in 1814, while the remaining three were held up by the censorship and still remain unpublished. It is a vast and unsweetened picture of Russian life in the provinces and the capitals, turning round the adventures of a poor squire, little more than a peasant, who by an irony of fate bears a prince's title. Narezhny had a grip on real life which places him above all the "prehistorical" Russian novelists. But he was too little of an artist, and his books, owing to their heavy style and their diffuseness, are difficult reading. He was in fact little read, and his influence on the development of the Russian novel is almost negligible.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOLDEN AGE OF POETRY

1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

THE Golden Age of Russian poetry is roughly contemporary with the great age of romantic poetry in the west of Europe. But its poetry is not romantic. It is far more *formal*, active, selective—in short, *classical*—than any other poetry (at any rate than any other school of poetry) of the nineteenth century. It was, in a sense, behind the times, a posthumous child of the eighteenth century. For general tone and atmosphere Pushkin has been compared to Mozart. The poets of western Europe who came nearest in tone and feeling to the poets of our Golden Age are poets of the later eighteenth century—Burns, Chénier, Parny. What is particularly important—the technical efficiency of the poets of the Golden Age never lags behind their inspiration. Their poetry is perfect, even when it is minor poetry; and when it is major poetry, it is great without qualification. Its technical perfection marks off the poetry of the twenties both from the primitive rudeness of the age of Derzhavin and from the degenerate laxity of the later nineteenth century.

Though creative and original where the other had been merely receptive, the poetry of the Golden Age was a direct continuation of the Karamzinian movement, its best fruit and chief justification. Being a continuation of that movement, it was "French"—and French of the eighteenth century, for it remained hostile to French romanticism. From 1820 onward the movement called itself romantic and was in open revolt against the rules of French classicism. It desired greater freedom, and novelty of forms; it liked originality and picturesqueness. It admired Shakspere for the broadness of his

design and for his profound understanding of the human heart, and Byron for his mighty eloquence and effective narrative methods. In comparison with the age of classicism, there was a revival of sentiment and feeling, but the sensibility of most of the poets of the Golden Age was purely classical; only a minority were at all infected by the "new sensibility," and then only by its earliest eighteenth-century forms. Nor was there any "return to Nature." Even the nature symbolism of the Ossianic school is absent from the poetry of Pushkin and his contemporaries. Romantic pantheism and romantic animism do not appear in Russian literature before the thirties.

What still more emphasizes the eighteenth-century character of the Golden Age is its distinct social colouring. It was a movement inside the gentry, a movement of *gentlemen.* Hence, in its early stages, the prevalence of light, society verse, of convivial and anacreontic subjects; the cult of friendship, of good company, and of wine. Socially the age of Pushkin marks the high-water mark of the literary hegemony of the gentry. Higher literature is completely monopolized by men of that class. At the same time the literary press is almost entirely in the hands of the non-noble class—of pedants, hacks, and hucksters. The opposition between the two classes is very clearly marked. The gentry, to whatever literary party they belonged, showed a contemptuously united front to the plebeians. The plebeians had their revenge in the thirties.

The Golden Age may be said to begin at the moment when poetry begins to emerge from the placid insipidities of the school of Dmitriev and acquires an independent and original accent in the first mature work of Zhukovsky, about 1808. A few years later, after the end of the wars, the younger partisans of Karamzin, headed by Zhukovsky, Batyushkov, and Vyazemsky, founded the semi-humorous literary society "Arzamas." Its sittings were a parody of the solemn meetings of the conservative literary society of Shishkov. The Arzamasians cultivated poetical friendship, literary small talk, and the lighter forms of verse.

After 1820 the movement became more serious. The influence of Byron reigns for about five years after 1821. The

tale in verse becomes the principal form of expression. The catchword of romanticism is defiantly accepted in the teeth of the conservatives. The works of Pushkin follow in rapid succession, and meet with loud success, which is rivalled by that of Zhukovsky, Baratynsky, and Kozlov. Poetry almost monopolizes the book market. The gentlemen's party acquires control over all literary opinion. But their day was short and early clouded. The repression of the Decembrist Revolt by Nicholas I (1825–6) was an irremediable blow to the intellectual *élite* of the gentry. At the same time the clear eighteenth-century atmosphere of the Golden Age is poisoned: young men of a somewhat younger generation introduced the first germs of German idealism. Lower-class journalists, but more intellectually ambitious and progressive than hitherto, control the press, and rise in the public favour. French romanticism, with its unbridled licence of bad taste, infects the air. The novel, stimulated by Scott, from 1829 begins to sell better than poetry. Delvig, the centre of the friendly circle of poets, dies in 1831. Pushkin marries in the same year, and becomes the leader of a conservative literary aristocracy. The young are no longer young, the summer of the Golden Age is over. After 1831 the front stage of literature is occupied, in Petersburg, by a host of vulgarizers and charlatans; in Moscow by the Adams of the new intelligentsia, who respect in Pushkin a venerable relic of the past, but discard his traditions, despise his friends, and refuse to read his new works. In 1834 appears the first article of Belinsky—the manifesto of a new era in the history of Russian civilization. When, in 1837, Pushkin died, Russian literature was far advanced in its new ways. Those who survived him, Zhukovsky, Baratynsky, Yazykov, Vyazemsky, were a small and isolated group in an alien, forgetful, and mainly hostile world.

2. ZHUKOVSKY

The first pioneer and the accepted patriarch of the Golden Age of poetry was Vasili Andreyevich Zhukovsky. He was born in 1783, in the government of Tula, the natural son of

a country gentleman of the name of Bunin and of a Turkish captive girl. His education in Moscow was dominated by pietist influences. After completing his education he lived on his father's estate. He gave lessons to his cousins and carried on a sentimental intercourse with them, bringing them up in the ways of sensibility. One of them (Marie Protasov, afterwards Voyeykov) became the object of a Platonic attachment, which survived her death (1823). In 1802 Zhukovsky sent to Karamzin's *Messenger of Europe* a translation of Gray's *Elegy*. The publication of that poem has more than once been declared to be the birthday of Russian poetry. In 1808 appeared Zhukovsky's first ballad, an adaptation of Bürger's *Lenore*, which gave the signal for a general ballad craze. In 1812, on the invasion of Napoleon, Zhukovsky joined the militia. He did no actual fighting, but a poem he wrote shortly after the battle of Borodino and while Napoleon was still in Moscow (*The Bard in the Camp of the Russian Warriors*) made his name famous outside the literary circles. In 1815–17 Zhukovsky was the most eminent, though not the most active, member of the Arzamas company. About the same time he was invited to give Russian lessons to the Princess of Prussia, then engaged to be married to the future Emperor Nicholas I. The young couple liked Zhukovsky, and when, in 1818, the future Alexander II was born, the poet was appointed his tutor. He remained in this situation till Alexander's majority. Zhukovsky's influence on his pupil has generally been regarded as highly beneficent and humanizing. His situation at court and his position as the eldest and, next to Pushkin, greatest poet of the time made him a very prominent figure in the literary world. From the first steps of the younger poet he was intimately related with Pushkin, and was always helpful when Pushkin got into trouble with the authorities. From 1831, after Pushkin's marriage, the poets exercised a sort of diarchy over what henceforward came to be known as the "literary aristocracy." Zhukovsky also befriended Gogol, and in 1838 played a principal part in the emancipation from serfdom of the Ukrainian poet Shevchenko. In 1839, his educational task being completed, Zhukovsky retired from court. In the fol-

lowing year he married a very young German girl and henceforward lived permanently on the Rhine, only occasionally visiting Russia, and working at vast poetical enterprises. He died in 1852, at Baden-Baden.

Up to about 1820 Zhukovsky was the leader of the advanced literary movement. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of his early work. He created a new poetical language on the basis of the Karamzinian reform. Both his metrical methods and his diction remained the standard for all the nineteenth century. The extent of his influence may be compared with that of Spenser's or Ronsard's. Besides these formal innovations Zhukovsky's reformed the very conception of poetry. In his hands it became, for the first time in Russia, the direct expression of feeling. It ceased to be a creation out of impersonal material, as it had been, and became the imaginative transposition of individual experience. There is no trace in his poetry of raw, unmastered, merely recorded, emotion: the sentimental experience is always completely transformed. But it was a step in the direction of expressive, emotional poetry. The next step was made by Lermontov. It was not made by Pushkin; the subjective element in Pushkin's poetry is less prominent and more subordinate to the creative design than in Zhukovsky's.

It is one of the curios of literary history that this first, and for some time to come most, personal and subjective Russian poet was almost exclusively a translator. His original work is small in extent. It consists of a few humorous epistles, a few occasional elegies, and a few lyrics. But these last are alone sufficient to give Zhukovsky a place in the first rank of poets. The ethereal lightness, the melodiousness, of his verse and the exquisite purity of his diction reach in them their highest perfection. Romantic melancholy and the resigned hope in a better beyond have never spoken in nobler or more exquisite accents. But it is characteristic of Zhukovsky that even these lyrics have sources in foreign poetry. Thus the wonderful lyric on the death of Marie Voyeykov (*19th March, 1823*) closely resembles in metre and construction a poem of the German romanticist Brentano. It is the actual words,

cadences, and intonation, the very texture of the verse, that make the poem what it is—and those slight touches which are at the hand of only the great poet. Zhukovsky's poetry of 1808–21 charmed the public by its atmosphere of romantic sensibility, of day-dreams, of optimistic religiosity, and of sweet resignation, with a touch of the mildly fantastic paraphernalia of the balladry of terror. But what was most admired by the initiated was the poet's supreme mastery, his metrical inventiveness, and above all the absolutely novel and unheard of purity, sweetness, and melodiousness, of his verse and diction, that were such a contrast to the splendidly barbaric ruggedness of Derzhavin.

The poets translated by Zhukovsky during this period were the romantic, pre-romantic, and even classical poets of Germany and England. His special favourites in Germany were Uhland and Schiller, whose Greek ballads (*Die Siegesfest*, etc.) are, owing to Zhukovsky, quite as classical in Russia as they are in Germany (if not more so). The English poets translated by him were Dryden (*Alexander's Feast*), Thomson, Gray (the *Elegy*), Southey, Scott, Moore, Campbell, and Byron (*The Prisoner of Chillon*). After what I have said of Zhukovsky's supreme and impeccable mastery in Russian verse it will scarcely be startling if I add that certain of his translations from his English contemporaries (none of whom was really a great craftsman) are very often superior to the original. Southey's *Queen Urraca*, Campbell's *Lord Ullin's Daughter*, Moore's *Death of the Peri*, Scott's *Eve of St. John*, and Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon* have both relatively and absolutely a higher place in Russian than they have in English poetry.

After 1830 Zhukovsky gradually abandoned the too fluent sweetness that had made him popular. Like Pushkin in the same years he strove after greater objectivity, a more Doric outline and more epic manner. Almost all his later work is either in blank verse or in hexameters. He uses both forms with the utmost freedom and variety, placing his words in the most "unpoetical" order, using the most destructive overflows, attaining a style which is "*beau comme de la prose*," and (in

blank verse) reminiscent of the later Shakspere. Among the principal works of this period are the adaptations (from the German) of the episodes of *Rustam and Sohrab*, and of *Nâl and Damayanti*. In both he succeeded in eschewing all sentimentality. In the former the effect is one of grand, primeval, rude majesty; in the latter of genuinely Indian wealth and colour. Still more remarkable is his adaptation, in very free and enjambed hexameters, of the German romanticist Fouqué's prose romance *Undine*. The atmosphere of the poem is one of optimistic religiosity and romantic fantasy, and akin to that of his early lyrics and elegies, but the story is told with majestic leisure and has a true epic tone. The most extensive task of his old age was the translation of the *Odyssey*, completed in 1847. Though he knew no Greek, and translated Homer from a word for word German translation, it is a masterpiece of exactness and reliability. Zhukovsky's *Odyssey* was intended to complete the Russian Homer, and is, as it were, a sequal to the translation of the *Iliad*, by Nikolay Ivanovich Gnedich (1784–1833), which appeared in 1830.

Gnedich was a poet of considerable merit, who wrote a few exquisite lyrics and a Russian idyll in the style of Theocritus that was highly reputed in its time. His *Iliad* is a high-sounding and magnificent *Iliad*, full of splendid Slavicisms, with a Virgilian accompaniment of sonorous trumpets, and a wonderful inventiveness in finding composite epithets. It is the most splendid example in Russian poetry of the grand classical style.

The *Odyssey* of Zhukovsky is very different. He deliberately avoids Slavicisms. He makes the *Odyssey* a homely, leisurely, biblical story of the daily life of patriarchal kings. But Zhukovsky does not sentimentalize Homer, and, though perhaps it is in the Telemachos and Nausicaa cantos that he is at his best, even in the cruelest parts of the *Mnesteroktonia* he gives a faithful reflection of the true Homer. The two Russian Homers are in a most happy way mutually complementary, and if Gnedich's *Iliad* is our highest achievement in the grand manner, Zhukovsky's *Odyssey* is unsurpassed as a heroic idyll.

3. OTHER POETS OF THE OLDER GENERATION

Zhukovsky was not alone, between 1810 and 1820, in his work of perfecting and refining the instrument of Russian verse. Other poets worked by his side in the same direction. The chief of these, and for some time almost a rival to Zhukovsky's supremacy, was Constantine Nikolayevich Bátyushkov. Born in 1787 in Vologda, Batyushkov served in the army, was wounded in 1806 at Heilsberg, and took part in the campaigns of 1812–14. After the end of the wars he was a prominent and active member of the Arzamas. His collected works appeared in 1817. Soon after that date he became a victim to a morbid melancholy. A prolonged stay in Italy failed to cure him, and in 1821 he became a permanent mental invalid. He lived for thirty-four years more in his native town, with only rare and transient luminous intervals. He died in 1855.

Like Zhukovsky Batyushkov was a modernist in verse and language, a continuer of the work of Karamzin, and a resolute enemy of Church Slavonic, and of archaistic rudeness. But unlike Zhukovsky, who was more romantic than most of his contemporaries and saturated with Germanic and English influences, Batyushkov was thoroughly "eighteenth century" and "Latin." Though he was no stranger to the "new sensibility," the groundwork of his personality was pagan and sensual. His masters were Latin and classical: the Latin and French elegiac poets Tibullus and Parny; Tasso and Petrarch, and the Greek Anthology. Batyushkov's ambition was to rival in Russian the sweetness and melody of Italian; this in the judgment of his contemporaries he almost achieved. His Russian is miles apart from the barbaric virility of Derzhavin. It is soft and sweet to the point of effeminacy. Batyushkov's output was not large. It consists of a few elegies and lyrics, where the language of sentimentalism is placed at the service of a purely sensual passion; of some elegies of a more rhetorical character, such as the sometime famous *Dying Tasso;* and the exquisite elegy to *The Shade of a Friend,* (beginning with the line: "I was leaving the misty shores of Albion"). In 1818 appeared the exquisite (free) translations of twelve amorous epigrams from

the Greek Anthology, which for beauty of rhythm and diction are his masterpieces. In the years immediately preceding his madness (1819–21) Batyushkov wrote some lyrical epigrams in a different manner from that of all his earlier verse. For strange beauty and haunting emotional intensity they are unique in Russian poetry. They are a rare instance of the creative influence of mental illness on poetry.

Another pioneer of form was Pavel Alexandrovich Katénin (1792–1853), one of the most curious figures of his time. He was a brilliant and clever critic, and was highly esteemed by Pushkin, who was almost alone in doing justice to his poetry. Katenin began as a champion of romanticism before romanticism had become hackneyed; when it became the slogan of a majority, he turned classicist, rallied to the banners of Shishkov, and wrote *Andromache*, the last "regular" tragedy to be written in Russian. His Shishkovist sympathies, however, were not merely the product of contrariness. His principal contention was that poetry should be *national*, and this led him away from the Karamzinians and Zhukovskyites. In his early ballads, written under the impulse of Bürger, he tried to attain nationality by the use of aggressive (and at that time objectionable) realism in diction and detail. These ballads had an appreciable influence on the Russian ballads of Pushkin. In his later work Katenin became agressively archaic, finally breaking away from the taste of the day. In all he did he was a genuine master of technique, but he lacked the fire that alone infects and attracts. After 1832 he abandoned literature, and lived in the seclusion of his estate, a profoundly embittered and dissatisfied man.

Younger than these poets, but belonging to the same early stages of the movement, was Baron Anton Antonovich Delvig (1798–1831). He was Pushkin's schoolfellow at the lyceum, and became his best friend. The numerous allusions to Delvig in Pushkin's poems, both before and after the former's death, are among the most beautiful expressions of friendship in all poetry. After leaving school Delvig lived in Petersburg, where he became the centre of the poetical world. His personal influence in the lives of the poets of the time was enor-

mous. He was noted for his indolence ("poetical laziness"), kind-heartedness, and common sense. From 1825 to his death he edited the yearly miscellany of the poets' party, *Northern Flowers*. In 1830 he succeeded in obtaining permission to publish a *Literary Gazette*. His early death in 1831 was a cruel blow to Pushkin and to all the poets of their circle.

As a poet Delvig developed early. All the essential characteristics of his style are present in his school verse, written before 1817. But he published little and late, owing chiefly to his famous laziness. He never became popular, though Pushkin and Baratynsky ranked him very high. He is not a subjective poet. Like the poets of the eighteenth century he does not make his inner life the material of his poetry, but takes his subjects from outside. His Russian songs were in his time his most popular work, but his most exquisite poems are those in the classical measures. No one, before or after, ever wrote such perfect epigrams (in the Greek sense) as Delvig did. Still better are his idylls, highly valued by Pushkin: *The Bathing Women* is unquestionably the highest achievement in Russian poetry in the more purely sensuous vision of classical antiquity. Impersonal, unemotional, formal, eminently craftsmanlike, and quite singularly unmeretricious, Delvig's poetry was made to be treated with contempt by the later nineteenth century. Our time has made a great effort to revive him, and he has been restored to his lawful place in history, possibly even more than that. For, like Katenin, though a great master, Delvig lacks that human significance which after all alone makes major poetry.

The kind of poetry cultivated with greatest zest by the younger Karamzinians and the members of the Arzamas was what the French eighteenth century called "fugitive" poetry. All the poets of the young school wrote light verse of this kind. Even the high seriousness of Zhukovsky stooped to it. Batyushkov, more than for his elegies and lyrical epigrams, was famous for his epistle *My Penates* (1811), which made his literary reputation, and was considered the masterpiece of the kind. Pushkin's work before his exile to the south of Russia consists almost entirely of fugitive poems.

Two of the best masters of fugitive poetry in the first decade of the Golden Age were Davydov and Vyazemsky. Though lesser artists, and lesser poets than Zhukovsky or Batyushkov, these two men are even more characteristic of their generation, and more typical of their school. Both are high-spirited, healthy, virile, unromantic, and, ultimately, shallowish. Both were great wits and fond of fun, in life as well as in literature.

Denis Vasilievich Davýdov * (1784–1839) was one of the most famous and popular soldiers of his day (he was also a past-master in making use of his military celebrity to advertise his literary work, and *vice versa*). He took part in all the wars of his lifetime. In 1812 he was the first to advise and practice the method of guerrilla warfare on the communications of the French army. This made him one of the most popular figures of the great war. His poetry, exiguous in extent, is consciously rough and soldierly. His early and most popular verses are in a style of his own making, known as the "hussar style." In them he sings the praise of reckless valour, as well on the field of battle as before the bottle. The diction in some is rather unconventional, and occasionally his words have to be replaced by dots. But it is always full of spirits (in both senses) and of great rhythmical go. His later poems are inspired by a late love for a very young girl. They are passionately sentimental, and as vivid and alive in the diction and the rhythmical elasticity as his hussar verses. Pushkin had a high opinion of Davydov's poetry and used to say that Davydov showed him the way to be original.

Prince Peter Andreyvich Vyázemsky was born in 1792. He was one of the most active members of the Arzamas and became an intimate friend of Pushkin. Their correspondence is a treasure-house of wit, fine criticism, and good Russian. In the twenties Vyazemsky was the most combative and brilliant champion of what then went by the name of romanticism.

* There is a tradition which identifies with him Tolstoy's Denisov in *War and Peace*. Though Davydov was probably a starting point for the making of Denisov, the character of Tolstoy's personage is in its final form entirely unlike that of the real Davydov.

In the thirties, like all the "literary aristocracy," he found himself out of date, and out of tune with the young generation. He had the great sadness of surviving all his contemporaries. Though it was precisely in his last years that his poetical talent bore its best fruit, he was forgotten and abandoned by critics and public long before he died. He grew into an irritated reactionary who heartily detested everyone who was born after 1810. He died in 1878, at the age of eighty-six. Though he was the journalistic leader of Russian romanticism, there can be nothing less romantic than his early poetry: it consists either of very elegant, polished, and cold exercises on the set commonplaces of poetry, or of brilliant essays in word-play, where pun begets pun, and conceit begets conceit, heaping up vast mountains of verbal wit. Sometimes pleasing and effective, these poems are more often than not overdone. His later poetry is more sober and more significant. It never became strictly personal, like Zhukovsky's or Pushkin's. It remained universal and typical—essentially classical. But the old and embittered man found new and beautiful intonations for the great eternal commonplaces, and as he approached death, the subject drew increasingly moving notes from him. Such poems as the stanzas to the memory of Davydov and the one on a funeral in Venice are among the purest gems of Russian poetry.

4. PUSHKIN

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin was born in Moscow on 26th May (O. S.) 1799. His father's family was one of the oldest of the Russian gentry. His mother, née Gannibal, was the grand-daughter of "Peter the Great's Nigger"—more exactly Abyssinian—Engineer-General, Abraham Gannibal. The poet was always proud both of his "six-hundred-year-old nobility" and of his African blood. His childhood and early boyhood were spent at home, in a French eighteenth-century atmosphere of frivolous and superficial culture. There was no mutual affection between son and parents. In 1811 Pushkin went to school at the Lyceum of Tsarskoye Selo (founded that year). The

Lyceum became more of a home to him than his family, and his schoolfellows always commanded the warmest and most permanent of his affections. While still at the Lyceum, Pushkin began writing verses. In 1814 his first poems appeared in the *Messenger of Europe*, and before he left the Lyceum he was a member of the Arzamas and regarded as a rival, almost an equal, by Zhukovsky and Batyushkov. In 1817, on completing his studies, he became a clerk in the Foreign Office, but the appointment was merely nominal and he did no office work. He lived in St. Petersburg, mixing with the most advanced, brilliant, and dissipated of his contemporaries, and tasting unreservedly of the pleasures of carnal love. All the time he was working at a "romantic epic" in six cantos, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, which appeared in the spring of 1820, taking by storm the young generation, and violently censured by the old. Zhukovsky on reading the manuscript gave Pushkin his portrait with the inscription "To a victorious pupil from a defeated master." But before its publication some of Pushkin's revolutionary epigrams had reached the knowledge of Alexander I, and the poet was ordered to leave Petersburg. He was transferred to a government office in Ekaterinoslav. Almost immediately on arriving there he fell ill, and was taken to the Caucasus by General Rayevsky, a famous soldier of 1812, with whose sons he contracted a lasting friendship, and for whose daughters a fervent admiration. The two months spent in the company of the Rayevskys in the Caucasus and the Crimea were one of the happiest periods in Pushkin's life. It was from the Rayevskys also that he got his first knowledge of Byron. From the end of 1820 to 1823 Pushkin served in Kishinev, doing pretty little official work, detesting the filthy barbarity of the Moldavians, leading the same reckless life he had led in Petersburg, and having sufficient freedom to pass much of his time at Kamenka, an estate in the Province of Kiev, that was one of the principal centres of the Revolutionary movement. But he worked more seriously than in Petersburg. He wrote *The Captive of the Caucasus*, which appeared in 1822 and had an even greater success than *Ruslan and Lyudmila; The Fountain of Bakhchisaray;* and numerous short

poems; and began *Evgeni Onegin.* In 1823 he was transferred to Odessa. He was delighted to breathe the freer and more European air of a big seaport, but his life became even more irregular and passionate. His Odessa life is marked by his love (almost simultaneous) for two women—the Dalmatian Amalia Riznich, and the wife of the Viceroy, Countess Elizabeth Woronzow. The former seems to have been the strongest sensual passion in his life and the object of several of his greatest love lyrics. His love for the latter led him into social entanglements, where he appears to have been most treacherously served by his Byronic friend, Alexander Rayevsky—himself a lover of the Countess. In August 1824 Pushkin was suddenly expelled from the Civil Service, and ordered to live permanently on his mother's estate of Mikhaylovskoye in the Province of Pskov. The pretext for this disgrace was a private letter intercepted by the police, where the poet expressed the opinion that "pure atheism," though by no means a comforting philosophy, was "the most probable." On arriving at Mikhaylovskoye Pushkin found his parents there, but a succession of scenes between the poet and his father led to the latter's leaving his scapegrace and dangerous son to himself. Pushkin remained in Mikhaylovskoye, alone except for the company of his old nurse, and the neighbourhood of Trigorskoye, a country place inhabited by a charming family of ladies —Mme Osipova and her two daughters. There Pushkin met Mme Kern, who became the subject of a rather trivial love-affair with him and of one of his most famous and inspired lyrics. The years spent at Mikhaylovskoye were particularly productive.

Pushkin's forced seclusion at Mikhaylovskoye prevented him from taking part in the December Revolt of 1825. His connexions with the rebels were obvious, but the new Emperor overlooked them and by a master-stroke of clever policy, summoned the poet to Moscow (September 1826) granted him a complete pardon, and promised to be his special protector and patron. Though apparently more free, Pushkin was subjected to an even more meddling supervision than under the preceding reign. What was worse, his inner freedom was forfeited, for

he was made to understand that his amnesty was such a signal display of mercy that he could never do too much to live up to it. After several abortive attempts at settling down, in 1829 Pushkin fell in love with Nathalie Goncharova, a young girl of sixteen, a dazzling beauty, but frivolous and insignificant. He proposed, but was rejected. Under the influence of this check he suddenly went off to the Caucasus, where a war was going on with Turkey, but was severely rebuked for doing so without permission. In the winter of 1829–30 he made several attempts to go abroad, but was not permitted to do so by his "protectors." In the spring of 1830 he again proposed to Nathalie and was this time accepted. His own financial affairs were far from brilliant—he got handsome sums for his books, but this was a precarious and irregular income, all the more as Nicholas's censorship often held them up. *Boris Godunov* had been thus prohibited since 1826, but now as a special favour, in order that he might meet the demand of his future family life, he was allowed to print it. It appeared in January 1831, but was met with faint praise and loud blame. The autumn before his marriage Pushkin spent in the country, at Boldino, and these two months were the most marvellously productive in his life. He was married in February 1831. His marriage was, at first, externally happy. But there was no real sympathy between the pair. Nathalie was frivolous and cold, besides being trivial and almost vulgar and quite free from all intellectual or poetical interests. Nathalie's beauty made her an immense success in Petersburg, in town and at court. It was to be able to invite her to court balls that Nicholas in 1834 made Pushkin a "gentleman of the chamber," an honour deeply resented by the poet. No longer the leader of an advanced school, Pushkin was now the head of the "literary aristocracy." He was venerated by the younger generation rather as a relic of the past than as a living force. All he wrote after 1830 met with no success. He half abandoned poetry, and devoted himself to a history of Peter the Great, which was never to be written. In 1836 he was after repeated refusals allowed to start a literary quarterly, *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*), which, however, like all he had done since 1831, met with no

success. Meanwhile his thraldom to the court increased—he became more and more dependent on the royal favour, especially since he had contracted considerable debts to the Treasury. He felt that he was suffocating in a society where a mere poet, in spite of his "six-hundred-year-old nobility," was looked down upon by the great courtiers descended from the favourites of eighteenth-century empresses, and was little more than his wife's husband. He tried to free himself from the noxious and deteriorating atmosphere, but was given to understand that if he left the town, it would be in disgrace. At last came the tragic end. His jealousy was exasperated by the attention paid to Nathalie by Baron Georges D'Anthès, a French Royalist in the Russian service. Pushkin called him out. D'Anthès at first succeeded in evading a duel by marrying Nathalie's sister, thus pretending to show that Pushkin was mistaken in his suspicions. But a few days after the marriage Pushkin learned that Nathalie and D'Anthès had again secretly met. He called him out a second time, in terms that made all escape impossible for D'Anthès. The duel was fought on 27th January 1837. Pushkin was mortally wounded, and died on the 29th. For fear of public demonstrations of sympathy his coffin was hurried away in the night from Petersburg to the monastery near Mikhaylovskoye, which he had chosen for his burial place.

Pushkin began writing early. There is a tradition, founded on the recollection of his elder sister, that he wrote French verse before he left home for the lyceum. His earliest datable work in Russian belongs to 1814. Only two or three immature and crude poems may be assigned, on internal evidence, to an earlier date. With the exception of these, Pushkin's verse was from the very beginning extraordinarily easy and fluent, almost on the highest level of a time when ease and fluency were the main aim of poets. If till about 1820 he remained inferior to Zhukovsky and Batyushkov, it was not for lack of mastery, but rather for the lack of original inspiration. Pushkin's lyceum verses are imitative, and, for a boy's verse, strikingly unemotional and unsentimental. He was a consummate technician before he really became a poet—an order of development not

usual with nineteenth-century poets. Some of his lyceum verses are exercises in the forms of verse practised by Zhukovsky and Derzhavin, but by far the greater part belong to the favourite Arzamasian kinds of fugitive poetry, friendly epistles and anacreontic lyrics. His style grew up in the school of Zhukovsky and Batyushkov, but the direct influence on it of the French classical poets is also considerable, and of these Voltaire was for a long time Pushkin's favourite. Next came the influence of Parny, whose remarkable and long-neglected elegies, inspired with unsentimental, classical, but genuinely passionate, love, were the models for the first of Pushkin's poems in which we can discern the accent of serious passion. By 1818 Pushkin's verse finally acquires that accent which is his alone. The epistles and elegies of these years are already latently great poetry. Through the impersonal brilliance of their Arzamasian wit we distinctly discern a heart and nerves of exceptionally rich vitality. There is a clear and cold atmosphere in these poems—and no feeling underlying them. The same atmosphere pervades *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (written 1818–20). It is a semi-ironic and frivolous romance, where only a few names and the barest skeletons of motifs are taken from chap-books of the type of *Bova* and *Eruslan*, but where all the treatment is essentially eighteenth century. There is nothing in it that might have shocked the taste of Voltaire. There is no seriousness in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* except the seriousness of very conscientious craftsmanship. It is pure play, like the classical ballet, which Pushkin was so fond of at the time he was writing the poem. It is the work of a confident and buoyant young man, who is already a past-master in the craft of poetry, but not yet quite a poet in the highest sense.

By 1818–20 the essential groundwork of Pushkin's poetic style was established, and remained unchanged till the end. It is "French" and classical. Its most characteristic feature —one which is particularly disconcerting to the romantic-bred reader—is the complete avoidance of all imagery and metaphor. Pushkin's images are all dependent on the happy use of the *mot juste* and his poetic effectiveness on the use of metonymy, and similar purely verbal figures of speech.

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Taken as a whole, the early verse of Pushkin and that of his later verse which is in the same style are perhaps the nearest approach outside French poetry to "that tone of mingled distinction, gaiety, and grace which," says Mr. Lytton Strachey, "is one of the unique products of the mature poetical genius of France."

The last French master of Pushkin was André Chénier, whose remains were published in 1819. This was to be the last external influence that affected the inner texture of Pushkin's style. Later influences affected only his choice of subject and his methods of construction.

The principal of these influences was Byron's, which dominates Pushkin's second period (1820–3). But the nature of this influence must be clearly understood. Pushkin had no essential kinship with the English poet. His exact and logical style is poles apart from Byron's untidy rhetoric. Byron's influence is limited to the narrative poems of this period, and in these it was the choice of subject and the disposition of the material that are due to Byron—the actual style remained as classical as before. The principal Byronic poems of Pushkin are *The Captive of the Caucasus* (written 1820–1, published 1822) and *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray* (written 1822, published 1824). The success of both of these poems was greater than that of any other work of Pushkin's. It was they that made Pushkin the most popular poet of the twenties. They are very far from giving the full measure of his genius. As in all that preceded them, the form is consistently greater than the content. The form (verse and diction) is perfect. In certain respects even, it was never excelled by Pushkin himself and certainly never approached by any other poet. The public revelled in the sheer beauty of word and sound which the poet so triumphantly upheld at the same flawless level from beginning to end. The effect is all the more marvellous as Pushkin's verse does not "sing." Its beauty and harmony is purely verbal—based on complete mutual adequacy of rhythm and syntax, and on an extraordinarily subtle and complex system of what one might call alliteration if the word might be used to denote anything so variedly and consistently unobtrusive. The per-

fection of this verbal harmony is reached in *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*. Afterwards Pushkin deliberately avoided the too fluent and caressing effects of this manner.

As I have said, the Byronic element in the two Byronic poems is limited to the subject and the narrative construction. The oriental beauty, with her fierce or devoted love, the disillusioned hero, with strong passions in the past, the oriental potentate, grim and silent, the hot atmosphere of "the clime of the East"—these are the elements taken by Pushkin from Byron. The fragmentary and dramatic manner of presentation, with its beginning *in medias res*, the abrupt transitions, and its lyrical epilogues, are the traces of Byron's narrative manner. But the Byronic spirit was only superficially assimilated by Pushkin, and the two poems must be regarded as further impersonal exercises on a borrowed theme. The most original and the most beautiful parts in both poems are the purely descriptive passages: in *The Captive* the acount of the warlike habits of the Circassians, as exact and as reliable in point of fact as those of the shrewdest eighteenth-century travellers; in *The Fountain* the more lyrical and atmospheric, but always eminently precise and plastic, descriptions of the harem, and evocations of the Crimea. Of the shorter romantic and Byronic poems belonging to this period *The Robber Brothers* (1821), which has less verbal beauty than the two longer poems, is interesting as having attained an exceptional popularity among the people: it has even been incorporated in a folk play.

Pushkin's lyrical poetry of the period is conspicuously free from every formal, and almost every emotional, trace of Byronism. It is a continuation of the poems of 1816–19. But it gradually acquires a more passionate and manly tone, becomes more personal, and more perfect in form. The direct influence of Chénier is apparent in a series of descriptive and elegiac epigrams, full of beautiful restraint and plastic expressiveness. The same influence in a more transformed and digested form is present in the greatest lyrical poem of the period (and one of the greatest he ever wrote), the wonderful *Napoleon* of 1821.

The strictly French, eighteenth-century, and Voltairian ele-

ment persisted in Pushkin some time after his acquaintance with Byron. It was only now that he wrote the most Voltairian of his poems, the blasphemous and lascivious *Gavriliada* (1821), which brought him much trouble in the next reign and was printed only long after his death (London, 1861). Though quite in the style of Voltaire's and Parny's antireligious poems, it is different from them in that it is not serious—not intended for antichristian propaganda, but merely the froth of an irreverent, sensuous and unbridled youth.

Pushkin's middle period may be regarded as coextensive with the writing of *Evgeni Onegin*, his longest, most popular and influential, and in certain ways most characteristic, work. It is a "Novel in Verse," in eight cantos, which are called chapters. It was begun in the spring of 1823 and completed in the autumn of 1830, a few finishing touches being added in 1831. The initial impulse came from *Don Juan*, but apart from the general idea of writing a long narrative poem in stanzaed verse, with a subject taken from contemporary life, and in a tone mingled of grave and gay, *Evgeni Onegin* has little in common with Byron's epic. It has not the qualities of *Don Juan*—its sea-like sweep, nor its satiric power. The qualities it has are of a nature entirely unlike Byron's. It is less loose and, though when Pushkin began it he had not any fixed idea how he was going to finish it, it is a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Its unity is not an intended and premeditated unity, but rather like the organic unity of an individual life. It reflects the stages through which the poet passed between his twenty-fourth and thirty-second years. The transition from the boisterously young high spirits of the first chapter to the resigned and muffled tragedy of the eighth is gradual, like the growth of a tree.

The first chapter, written in 1823, is the crowning glory of Pushkin's youth. It is the most brilliant of all his works. It sparkles and bubbles like champagne—a comparison long hackneyed, but still inevitable. It is the description of the life of a young St. Petersburg dandy (the English word is used), the life familiar to Pushkin himself before his exile. It is the only one of the eight chapters where the gay definitely

predominates over the grave. The later chapters are in the same style, but chastened and mellowed down as years proceed. The mixture of humour (not satire) and poetical sentiment, and the infinite wealth and variety of the emotional shadings and transitions, recall *Tristram Shandy* (whose author Pushkin esteemed highly), but with a freedom, a spontaneity, a vigorous go that was entirely beyond the reach of Sterne.

Evgeni Onegin is the crowning glory of Pushkin's first maturity and the fullest expression of what may be called his "subjective" manner, as opposed to the objective and impersonal manner of his latter years. Of all his works it has the least *apparent* restraint: the poet lets himself go in digressions, lyrical, humorous, polemical. He makes no show of artistic economy. More than anywhere else he relies for his effects on atmosphere. But his sense of measure and his unerring mastery are as present in *Onegin* as elsewhere.

The actual manner of *Onegin* has been imitated by numerous Russian poets, never with more than questionable success. It demanded two qualities that are extremely rare in conjunction —a boundless, spontaneous vitality, and an unerring sense of artistic measure. When I speak of the important influence of *Onegin* on later literary developments I do not allude to the direct and metrical progeny of this "novel in verse." It is the kind of realism first introduced in it, the style of character drawing, the characters themselves, and the construction of the story that are to be regarded as the fountain-heads of the later Russian novel. The realism of *Onegin* is that peculiarly Russian realism which is poetical without idealizing and without surrendering anything of reality. It is the same realism that will live again in Lermontov's novel, in Turgenev, and Goncharov, in *War and Peace*, and in the best of Chekhov—though its legitimacy outside the perfect poetical form given it by Pushkin is open to doubt. The character drawing of *Onegin* is not analytical, nor psychological, but poetical, dependent on the lyrical and emotional atmosphere accompanying the personages—not on the anatomy of their thoughts and sentiments. This style of portraiture was inherited from

Pushkin by Turgenev and other Russian novelists, but not by Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. Of the characters themselves Onegin and Tatiana are the forefathers of a whole race of characters in Russian fiction; Lermontov's, Goncharov's and Turgenev's especially, are entirely of this family. Finally the construction of the story, so different from that of Pushkin's prose stories, became the standard for the Russian novel. The simplicity of the plot, its logical development from the essential features of the heroes, and the unhappy, suggestively muffled ending, gave the pattern to the Russian novelists—especially, again, to Turgenev. Much in the methods of *Onegin* may be termed romantic. But the spirit of the poem is not. As in all the mature works of Pushkin it is dominated by the stern moral law of the Fates. Onegin's irresponsible self-indulgence and fidelity to self subtly, inevitably, untheatrically, undo him, while the calm self-command and resignation of Tatiana give her that unquestionable halo of moral greatness which is inevitably associated with her name. The greatness of Pushkin in the creation of Tatiana is that he avoided the almost unavoidable pit of making the virtuous wife who coldly rejects the man she loves a prig, or a puritan. Tatiana is redeemed in her virtue by the sadness she will never conquer, by her resigned and calm resolve never to enter her only possible paradise, to live with never a possibility of happiness. The Tatiana-Onegin relation has often been revived in Russian fiction and the juxtaposition of a small and weak man with a strong woman became almost hackneyed in Turgenev and others. But the classical attitude of Pushkin, of sympathy without pity for the man and of respect without reward for the woman, has never been revived.

During the time Pushkin was at work at *Evgeni Onegin* he wrote numerous other short and long poems, of varied initial significance, but invariable perfection. The nearest kin to *Onegin* are the tales in verse of contemporary Russian life, *Count Nulin* (1825), a crisp, clever anecdote in verse in a more purely realistic and ironic manner; and *The Little House in Kolomna* (1830), a poem in octaves, a kind of Russian *Beppo*, his last essay in the "extensive" style of *Onegin*.

The Byronic narrative-poem form was continued in *The Gipsies* (1824, published 1827) and *Poltava* (1828, published 1829). These poems are immeasurably superior to the two earlier Byronic tales. Of the influence of Byron nothing remains in them but the merest idea of narrative in verse with a lyrical colouring, and with abrupt passages from episode to episode. *The Gipsies* is among the greatest works of Pushkin. It is, with *Onegin*, the first in which he reached the full measure of his genius, and the first, also, in which begins the gradual evolution from the "extensive," mellifluous, and caressing style of his youth to the sterner beauty of his later work. Its setting is conventional—the gipsies of Bessarabia are not treated realistically, but merely as ideal representatives of a natural state of human society. The subject is the tragic inability of sophisticated and civilized man to throw away his convention-bred feelings and passions, especially the feeling of ownership of his mate. The poem is, on the face of it, a strong affirmation of freedom—of the freedom of the woman against the man—and a denunciation of the unnatural wickedness of vengeance, and of punishment. It is obviously and patently a plea for anarchism, and has been commented on in this sense by Dostoyevsky (in his famous Pushkin Address) and by Vyacheslav Ivanov. However strangely out of tune this anarchism may be with all the later work of Pushkin, it cannot be explained away and must be accepted as an essential ingredient of his philosophy. But the essentially classical religion of the Tragic Fates, of Nemesis working as an inevitable law of nature, is nowhere more fully expressed than in *The Gipsies*. It was Pushkin's first attempt at tragedy, and one of his greatest. It is too easy to philosophize about *The Gipsies* —the most temptingly universal imaginative work in the Russian language. It is less easy to do justice to its poetical beauty, and speaking of it one is too apt to forget the lesson of restraint that is the best lesson to be learned from Pushkin. The verse, less fluent and voluptuous than in *The Captive* and in *The Fountain*, is tighter, fuller, more saturated with complex expressiveness. Such passages as the old gipsy's tale of Ovid, the end of the poem (with the speech of the old man on Aleko's mur-

der), and especially the epilogue, are unsurpassable summits of poetry. One can only be deeply grateful to the Fates for allowing us to have such plenty.

Poltava is a further step towards the objective and impersonal manner. In it Pushkin deliberately and studiously avoids the fluent loveliness of his southern poems. To us its stern and harsh style sounds magnificently heroic, but its first readers were disagreeably taken aback by this new departure, and refused to admire it. It is not a perfect whole—the romantic love-story of the old hetman Mazeppa for his god-child is imperfectly fused with the national epic of the struggle of Peter with Charles of Sweden. The epic itself which forms the background of the first two cantos and the prevailing subject of the third (with its famous description, so exact in its condensed ornateness, of the battle of Poltava) is Pushkin's first contribution to that impersonal, national, group poetry which had inspired Lomonosov and Derzhavin and which had been dead since the triumph of the Karamzinists. After Pushkin it was once more to die. The great glory of *Poltava*, apart from this voicing of national and supra-individual sentiment, is its diction, magnificent in its very baldness and terseness, so happily grand and powerful is the choice of words, never archaic, but always charged with the richest and greatest associations.

A style similar to *Poltava*, terse and saturated, is used in several unfinished narrative fragments of this and the following period. The most important are *Cleopatra, or the Egyptian Nights* (begun 1825, resumed 1835) and *Galub* (*c.* 1830). The latter is a story of the Caucasus strikingly different in style from *The Captive;* the former, one of Pushkin's most memorable conceptions, a magnificent poem of death and lust.

The period of *Evgeni Onegin* is also the period of Pushkin's best and greatest lyrical output. With few exceptions (the most notable being the great Napoleon ode) none of his lyrical poems written before 1824 are on the very highest level of his genius. After that date he often continued to write in the lighter, occasional style of his early years, and these poems acquire a mellower and subtler grace, even if they lose the clear, youthful vigour of the earlier ones. But his serious lyrical

poetry written between 1824 and 1830 is a body of lyrical verse unapproached in Russian and unsurpassed in any poetry. It is impossible without quotations from the originals to prove the statement, or to give an adequate idea of the nature of this poetry. Much of it is subjective, occasional, and emotional—the actual biographical occasion is frequently known. But the occasions are idealized, sublimated, and universalized, and the poems preserve no ragged edges of extra-poetic sentiment, or undistilled emotion. Though subjective and demonstrably based on individual experience, they are general in tone, as classical poetry is. They seldom contain any striking psychological observation, or any revelation of the all-too-personal. Their appeal, like the appeal of Sappho, is to common human experience. Their style, which is a further development of Zhukovsky's, is also of that classical quality which, says Montesquieu in speaking of Raphael, "*frappe moins d'abord pour frapper plus en suite.*" The beauty of the style, which, as always in Pushkin, is free from wit, imagery, and metaphor, is a Greek beauty that depends as much on what is left unsaid as on what is said. It depends on the choice of words, on the adequacy of rhythm to intonation, and on the complex texture of sound—the wonderful *alliteratio Puschkiniana* so elusive and so all-conditioning. It is impossible here to quote or analyse any of these lyrics. I can only enumerate some of the most beautiful: the lines on jealousy beginning: "The stormy day is spent"; the Lyceum anniversary of 1825—the greatest hymn to friendship in all poetry; the stanzas to Mme Kern ("I remember a wonderful moment," 1825); the elegy (sixteen lines) on the death of Amalia Riznich (1826); the *Foreboding* (1828); and the lyrics addressed to a dead mistress, probably Amalia Riznich, written a few months before his marriage (1830), especially, what is perhaps the most intensely perfect of all, *For the Shores of thy Distant Fatherland* (*Dlya beregov otchizny dal'noy*). A group apart is formed by the nature lyrics—the most classical of all—with their conception of inanimate and irresponsive nature. Among the best are *The Storm* (1827), with its famous comparison between the beauty of the storm and the beauty of

"a girl on the rock," to the latter's advantage; *The Winter Morning* (1829); and *The Avalanche* (1829). On an even higher level of poetical significance are two poems which are Pushkin's grandest utterances in the grand style—the often-quoted and much-too-often-commented-on *Prophet* (1826); and the tense and terrible *Upas-tree* (*Anchar*, 1828).

To the same period belong Pushkin's best ballads, *The Bridegroom* (1825), and *The Drowned Man* (1828). The style of these ballads is the realistic style introduced by Katenin, but perfected and refined with all the mastery of Pushkin.

After 1830 Pushkin's lyrical poetry tends to become impersonally universal and severely bare of all ornament. Henceforward its characteristics are: restraint, reticence, and an ascetic avoidance of all that which the public associates with poetic beauty—mellifluous ease, melodious tone, attractive sentiment. The most characteristic poems of the thirties are impersonal elegiac meditations, proceeding from a "thinking heart" brooding on the great commonplaces of universal experience. The most majestic of these poems is *The Captain* (1836), an elegy on the portrait of the wronged and misunderstood hero of 1812—Field-marshal Barclay de Tolly. But by the side of this *odi profanum vulgus* sentiment Pushkin attempted to voice "group feelings," as in his famous retort to the French friends of Poland, *To the Detractors of Russia* (1831). One of the most perfect unadorned, prosaic, and simplest poems is that noble tribute to the man in the hero—*The Feast of Peter the Great* (1835). But by the side of these high and supra-personal utterances other sounds came from him—the fruit of his prolonged torture at the hand of Nicholas, Nathalie, and society. The noble restraint of *The Captain* is a striking contrast to the grim and weird irony of those lines on *Madness* (*Neday mne Bog soyti s uma*, 1833), which are one of the most poignant "mad poems" ever written. The few lyrics of this latter type were published only after the poet's death.

Most of Pushkin's narrative poems written after 1830 are personative, or "stylized," as we say in Russia. The poet is masked in a borrowed form, or borrowed subject, or both, and

his human personality is carefully and effectively hidden. Such is *Angelo* (1833), a paraphrase of *Measure for Measure*, where Pushkin tried to preserve Shakspere's "broad painting of character" while stripping it of the irrelevancies and excrescences of Elizabethan exuberance. Of all Pushkin's poems *Angelo* has had the least share of praise, but it throws an important light on the workings of his creative mind. More purely impersonal work is the *Songs of the Western Slavs* (1832), adaptations of Mérimée's forgeries of Serbian folk-lore in the style of the Russian folk epic; and, above all, the fairy-tales (*Skazki*, 1831–2): the cynically witty *Parson and his Man Baldà*, an admirable revival of the manner of the popular doggerel verse of the eighteenth century; the maliciously ironical *Golden Cockerel;* and the best of all, *King Saltan*. The longer one lives, the more one is inclined to regard *King Saltan* as the masterpiece of Russian poetry. It is purest art, free from all the irrelevancies of emotion and symbol, "a thing of beauty" and "a joy for ever." It is also the most universal art, for it has the same appeal for a child of six and to the most sophisticated poetry-reader of sixty. It requires no understanding; its reception is immediate, direct, unquestionable. It is not frivolous, nor witty, nor humorous. But it is light, exhilarating, bracing. It has high seriousness, for what can be more highly serious than the creation of a world of perfect beauty and freedom, open to all?

I fully realize that the claim for *King Saltan* to be accepted as *the* masterpiece of Pushkin has little chance of getting a majority of votes. Such a majority is virtually pledged to the last great narrative poem of Pushkin—*The Bronze Horseman* (written 1833, published posthumously 1841). This poem certainly has very substantial claims to absolute pre-eminence. There is no conception of poetic greatness from the standpoint of which this pre-eminence could be challenged, except that (hypothetic) standpoint which would demand of all poetry that it be as free from human irrelevancies as is *King Saltan*. The classicist, the romanticist, the realist, the symbolist, and the expressionist must all agree in their appreciation of *The Bronze Horseman*. Its actual subject is the Petersburg inunda-

tion of 1824 and the effect it had on Evgeni, a poor and insignificant clerk, by washing away into the sea his sweetheart's house with all its inhabitants. Its philosophical (or whatever the word) subject is the irreconcilable conflict of the rights of the community, as incarnate in the *genius loci* of the city, the bronze statue of Peter the Great on the Senate Square—and of those of the individual, as represented by the wretched Evgeni, who is undone by the mere geographical factor of the site of Petersburg. The greatness of the poem lies particularly in the fact that Pushkin makes no attempt to reconcile the two in any superior harmony. And though the poem begins with a splendid hymn to Peter and Petersburg, and the figure of the great Emperor dominates it in semi-divine proportions, it is a strikingly different figure from the human Peter of *Poltava* and of *The Feast of Peter the Great*—an inhuman and potent demon, who knows no mercy. The poet's essential sympathy for the undone Evgeni is by no means impaired by the greatness of his enemy. And the issue of the moral conflict remains in the balance—unsolved. In style *The Bronze Horseman* is a step further in the direction of *Poltava*. The concentrated fullness and tightness of the octosyllabics; the vocabulary, strictly realistic, but saturated with the utmost expressiveness, the elemental majesty of the movement, the endless inward vistas opened by each word and by the whole, give the poem a poetic weight which fully justifies acceptance of it as the greatest example in Russian of great poetry.

Pushkin's first, and longest, play, *Boris Godunov* (1825, published 1831), was written, like his first stories in prose, primarily as a formal experiment. In writing it he was interested not so much in the doings and destinies of his characters as in the destinies of Russian tragedy and of Russian dramatic metre. *Boris Godunov* is a first essay in Russian romantic—Shaksperian—tragedy as opposed to the hitherto prevalent French forms. When, in 1826, Pushkin brought it to Moscow, it was acclaimed as his masterpiece by the young idealists whose idols were Shakspere (a German Shakspere) and Goethe. It is hardly possible to-day to share their view. *Boris Godunov* must rather be regarded as one of the immature and

preparatory works of Pushkin, less mature and less perfect than much that had preceded it, than *The Gipsies*, for instance, or the early chapters of *Onegin*. The subject of the play is taken from Karamzin. It is one of those inset dramatic stories that are the principal literary attraction of his *History*. In his interpretation of the facts, Pushkin closely followed Karamzin and this was a severe handicap. *Boris Godunov* is a tragedy of expiation, but nowhere else does Pushkin treat the theme with less inevitable mastery. At times it is almost sentimental. The metre, a particularly monotonous form of blank verse, is not quite satisfactory. The diction is somewhat stilted and conventional. And the construction of the play is in many ways narrative rather than dramatic. For a dialogued chronicle, however, to be read, not acted, it is masterly, and one of Pushkin's first triumphs in economy. The characters, especially the False Demetrius, are admirably drawn. The prose scenes, with their fine irony, are the best in the play and have nothing to compare with in all previous Russian literature. In two or three places the tragedy attains real dramatic beauty—as in the scene of Boris's death, and in the grandly condensed final scene, with the massacre of the Godunovs (*behind* the scenes—a French touch) and the proclamation of the impostor as tsar. *Boris Godunov* remained a closet play. Pushkin's dream of seeing it revolutionizing the Russian stage never came true. Its influence, both immediate and posthumous, was extensive, but not intrinsically significant—Russia never succeeded in producing really original "Shaksperian" tragedy.

On a much higher level of perfection and originality stand Pushkin's later plays—the four so-called Little Tragedies, and *Rusalka*. The former were written mainly in the wonderful Boldino autumn of 1830. Two of them, *Mozart and Salieri* and *The Feast during the Plague*, were published shortly afterwards; the third, *The Covetous Knight* (the English title is Pushkin's own), in 1836 (anonymously). *The Stone Guest*, finally revised only in that year, remained unpublished till after the poet's death (1840). Unlike *Boris Godunov* the Little Tragedies were not planned as experiments in form. They were rather essays in understanding of character and of dra-

matic situation. One of the titles proposed and rejected by Pushkin for the whole group was "Dramatical Investigations." The form of the diminutive tragedy was suggested by the similar productions of Barry Cornwall (whom Pushkin, like many of his contemporaries, even in England, valued higher than we do); *The Covetous Knight* bears the subheading, "Scenes from the tragicomedy by Chenstone" (a writer unknown to the *Dictionary of National Biography*). *The Feast during the Plague* is a fairly accurate translation of a scene of John Wilson's *City of the Plague*. Thus the Little Tragedies may be regarded as largely due to English suggestion.

They are among the most original, characteristic, and perfect work of the poet. In them Pushkin reached his greatest degree of concentration. With the exception of *The Stone Guest* they can hardly be called plays. They are rather isolated situations, dramatic "points," but points charged with such significance that they do not demand any further development. They are the application to drama of the lyrical method of concentration. Their length varies from one scene and a little over two hundred lines (*The Feast*) to four acts and about five hundred lines (*The Stone Guest*). The least complex is *The Feast*. Pushkin's creative work in it was reduced to choosing where to begin and where to end, to translating Wilson's indifferent English verse into his own supreme Russian, and to adding two songs, both of which are among his best; one of them, *The Hymn in Honour of the Plague*, is the most terrible and weird he ever wrote—one of his rare revelations of the dark side of things. *Mozart and Salieri* is a study of the passion of envy, and of the Divine Injustice that endows with genius whom it will and rewards not the life-long labour of the devotee. *The Covetous Knight* is one of the greatest and grandest studies of the miser—the second scene, where the miserly baron soliloquizes in his treasure vault, is the grandest dramatic monologue in Russian, and perhaps Pushkin's most sustained piece of poetic magnificence. As for *The Stone Guest*, it shares with *The Bronze Horseman* the right to be regarded as Pushkin's masterpiece. It is less ornate and less apparently saturated than *The Horseman*. From beginning

to end it never once abandons the diction of prose, but it even outdoes *The Horseman* in the limitless psychological and poetic suggestiveness of its severely unornamented verse. It is the story of Don Juan's last love-affair—with the widow of the man he had murdered—and of his tragic end. It is Pushkin's highest achievement on the subject of Nemesis—his greatest subject. For the flexibility of the blank verse (so different from that of *Boris Godunov*), for the infinitely subtle marriage of colloquial with metrical rhythm, for the boundless pregnancy of the dialogue, for the subtly distilled atmosphere of the south—and of atonement—it has no equal. In spite of its Spanish subject, it is also of all Pushkin's works the most characteristically Russian—not in any metaphysical meaning of that much abused word, but because it achieves what can be achieved only in Russian, in being at once classical, colloquial, and poetical, and because it embodies in their perfection all the best aspirations of Russian poetry—its striving towards selective, unornamental, realistic, and lyrical perfection. It is also of Pushkin's works the one that most defies translation—for in it the poetical and emotional value of every word is put to the fullest use, and fully exhausted, and the natural possibilities of Russian rhythm (*at the same time* colloquial and metrical) are made to yield all they can. The mere skeleton of the play will give an idea of Pushkin's sober economy and restraint, but not of the infinite wealth behind them.

The last of Pushkin's dramatic essays, *Rusalka* (*The River Nymph*), remains a fragment. Were it not for that, it would be third, with *The Bronze Horseman* and *The Stone Guest*, in claiming the first place in Russian poetry. What has been said of the verse and diction of *The Stone Guest* has to be repeated of *Rusalka*. The difference is that the subject and atmosphere are Russian. It was also to be a tragedy of expiation—the revenge of the seduced girl, who throws herself into the river and becomes "a powerful and cold water-nymph," on her faithless woer, the prince.

Pushkin's greatest contemporary successes with the general

public were *The Captive of the Caucasus* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray;* with the critical *élite* of his generation, *Boris Godunov;* all of them works of immature youth. His later works, beginning with *Poltava*, met with increasingly cool receptions, and on the eve of his death he was regarded by the young generation as a venerable, but obsolete, classic, who had outlived his time and was ossified alive. His death was a signal for his recognition as a national glory. But the men of the forties were far from giving him his due—they regarded him as an admirable artist who had formed the language and established the originality of Russian literature, but who was going to be, or actually had been, superseded by more national and modern writers. For the Slavophils he was not Russian; for the radical westernizers, not modern enough. Both preferred Gogol. Only a minority of men, like Turgenev on the one hand and Grigoriev and Dostoyevsky on the other, laid the foundation of that uncompromising Pushkin cult which is now the common inheritance of every educated Russian. But if Turgenev was to a certain extent the genuine heir to the less vigorous and vital, more "feminine," sides of Pushkin, Grigoriev and Dostoyevsky were men of an entirely alien spirit, and their cult of Pushkin was precisely due to their awareness of the presence in him of supreme values that were unaccessible to them. Their cult of Pushkin was the religion of a paradise lost. The main mass of the intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century was either indifferent or hostile to Pushkin. For many years the rule of utilitarianism prevented them from seeing his greatness. But among the elect the cult grew steadily. There can be no doubt that Dostoyevsky's address in 1880, for all its fantastic un-Pushkinity, was powerfully effective in promoting it. A further date was the lapse of the copyright in the poet's works in 1887, which inaugurated an era of cheap and numerous editions. The consciousness of Pushkin's supremacy and centralness in Russian literature and civilization grew apace, unostentatiously, but irrevocably. The twentieth century received it full-grown. By the time of the Revolution it was so ubiquitous and unconquerable that even the Bolsheviks, who are in spirit as alien to Pushkin as

Dostoyevsky was, excluded his name almost alone from their general oblivious condemnation of pre-Revolutionary Russia.

5. MINOR POETS

The twenties were a time when poetry was more universally popular than it has ever been in Russia either before or since. The principal form it took was the Byronic tale in verse, whose vogue was started in 1822 by Pushkin's *Captive* and Zhukovsky's translation of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and lasted till the end of the decade. Before the sudden outburst of novel-writing in 1829 tales in verse were even best sellers. The greatest successes were Pushkin's two "southern poems" (*The Captive* and *The Fountain*). Almost, if not quite, equal to Pushkin's was the success of Kozlov.

Ivan Ivanovich Kozlóv (1779–1840) was a man of an older generation. But he began writing poetry only after 1820, when he became blind. He stands out among the poets of the Golden Age for the comparative inadequacy of his technique. His poetry appealed to the easily awakened emotions of the sentimental rather than to the higher poetic receptivity. Still he has that air of grace and distinction common to the poets of a period when it was impossible to write badly. His popularity with contemporaries was based chiefly on the enormously successful *Monk* (1824)—a tale in verse in which the darkness of a Byronic hero is sentimentalized, and redeemed by ultimate repentance. *The Monk* produced as large a family of imitations as either of Pushkin's Byronic poems. Kozlov's two other narrative poems, *Princess Nathalie Dolgoruky* (1828), a sentimental variation on the theme of that noblewoman's misfortunes, and *The Mad Girl* (1830), met with a somewhat diminished success. During his blindness Kozlov learnt English, and did much translating from that language. To-day the only poems of his still universally remembered are his translations of Moore's *Evening Bells* and of Charles Wolfe's *Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna*. The latter in particular is both an exceptionally faithful translation and a beautiful piece of Russian verse.

The third poet, after Pushkin and Kozlov, to win general recognition in the Byronic narrative poem was Kondrati Fedorovich Ryléyev (1795–1826). He was one of the principal leaders of the Decembrist movement, and the soul of the Northern Society which organized the revolt of the 14th December. His name headed the list of those sentenced to death, and he was hanged in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul on 13th June 1826, together with Pestel and three others. His life belongs to political more than to literary history. Suffice it to say that he was one of the sincerest, noblest, and purest of the revolutionaries.

His literary career began in 1820. In 1823, together with his fellow conspirator, the novelist and poet Alexander Bestuzhev, he started publishing a yearly "almanac" the *Polar Star*, which was the first publication to be entirely controlled by the "gentlemen." The same year appeared his patriotic and historical poems *Dumy* (*Meditations*), suggested by the similar poems of the Polish poet Niemcewicz, and proceeding from a plutarchian conception of Russian history as a collection of exemplars of civic virtue. With few exceptions, the poems are stilted and conventional. Much superior to them is Ryleyev's narrative poem *Voynarovsky* (1825). It is the story of Mazeppa's nephew, a champion of Ukrainian liberty, pining away in his Siberian exile. Though not a perfect work of art, and somewhat monotonous in its rhythmical movement, it is a noble and manly poem, inspired by the love of freedom. It was highly valued by Pushkin, who even imitated some passages of it in *Poltava*. But Ryleyev's best work is the poems inspired by his revolutionary eagerness, written in the year of the revolt: the narrative fragment (also, nominally, on an Ukrainian theme) *The Confession of Nalivayko*, and especially *The Citizen*, written a few days before the Fourteenth. This last poem is one of the finest pieces of revolutionary eloquence in the language.

In the second half of the twenties the Byronic tale became the property of the frankly second-rate, who in a very short space of time wore it threadbare.

The other kind of verse that was most popular in the

twenties was the elegy and the short, semi-society lyric of sentiment. Its greatest (and most popular) masters were Zhukovsky, Pushkin, and Baratynsky. But other poets of far less genius wrote short elegies and stanzaed poems of elegiac sentiment that are almost as good as the average of the great masters. A spirit of high craftsmanship was diffused in the very atmosphere of the twenties, and an air of grace and distinction redeems the intrinsic mediocrity of the minor poets of the day. They need not detain us and I will only just mention as one of the most pleasantly representative Peter Alexandrovich Pletnev (1792–1865)—Pushkin's friend and literary agent, and after his death editor of his magazine *Sovremennik*.

6. BARATYNSKY

Pushkin's worthiest rival among his contemporaries, and the only other poet of the twenties who may claim the adjective great, was Evgeni Abramovich Baratýnsky (or Boratynsky, as he sometimes spelt his name and as it is spelt by his descendants to-day). He was born in 1800 on the family estate of Mara, in the Province of Tambov (South Central Russia). At twelve he was sent to the "Corps of Pages," an aristocratic military school. Before long he fell in with bad company, which resulted in his being expelled for theft. The terms of his expulsion forbade his entering any school or any kind of government service. He was reduced to becoming a private soldier, at first in a regiment of the footguards in Petersburg. It was then he made his acquaintance with Delvig, who encouraged him, rallied his falling spirits, and introduced him into the literary press. In 1820 Baratynsky was transferred to a regiment garrisoned in Finland, where he remained six years. The poetry written during this period established his reputation. In 1825 he at last received a commission, and the next year left the service and settled in Moscow. He married and his family life was happy, but a profound melancholy remained the background of his mind, and of his poetry. During this period he published several books of verse which were highly valued by the best critics of the "poets' party," including

Pushkin and Kireyevsky, but met with the comparatively cool reception of the public and violent ridicule on the part of the young "plebeian" journalists (Nahezhdin). In 1843 Baratynsky left Moscow for a journey abroad. He passed a winter in Paris, where he was introduced to the French literary world, and in the next spring he went to Italy, by boat from Marseilles to Naples. A few weeks after his arrival he suddenly fell ill, and died on 29 June 1844.

Baratynsky's work consists of two parts, almost equal in bulk, but not in merit: his tales in verse, and his shorter poems. The former would never have been written without the example of Pushkin, but they are not so much imitations of the greater poet as conscious efforts to write differently. The first, *Eda*, is the simple story of the seduction of a Finnish farmer's daughter by a hussar officer billeted in her father's house—a subject old-fashioned already in the twenties, and reminiscent of the eighteenth century. It is treated with careful and consistent avoidance of rhetoric in a realistic and homely style, with a touch of sentimental pathos, but not a trace of romanticism. It is written, like all Baratynsky wrote, in a wonderfully precise style, next to which Pushkin's seems hazy. The descriptive passages are among the best—the stern nature of Finland was particularly dear to Baratynsky. But what is especially pleasing is the delicate psychological drawing of the heroine—as mere psychology no doubt superior to everything in Russian literature before it.

His second narrative poem, *The Ball* (1828), is more romantic. It is the story of the suicide of a fatal and romantic society lioness, abandoned by her lover for "an affected little minx, with dulcet silliness in her eyes, all in fluffy curls, like a King Charlie, with a sleepy smile on her lips"—the favourite romantic contrast of the dark and the fair beauty. The setting is realistic, but the attempts at humour are unhappy: Baratynsky conspicuously lacked that natural ease without which humour is so hard to stand. The third tale in verse, and the longest, is *The Gipsy Girl* (1831). It is in the same style as *The Ball* and on a similar subject; only the dark lady is a gipsy, and instead of committing suicide she inadvertently kills

her faithless lover, believing she is giving him a love drink.

Baratynsky's lyrical poetry falls again into two parts almost equal in bulk, but unequal in merit: in his earlier verse he is the most brilliant and representative poet of the twenties. It belongs to the Arzamas school of poetry. The principal influences traceable in it are the young Pushkin, the French poets of the later eighteenth century (Parny, Millevoye), and Batyushkov. What it has in common with the later period is the exceedingly clear and dry atmosphere—dryer and clearer than anything in the whole of Russian poetry—and the cold, metallic brilliance and sonority of the verse. For anything like the effect in English poetry one can go only to Pope. It consists of fugitive, light pieces in the anacreontic and Horatian manner, some of which are decidedly the masterpieces of the kind; of love elegies, where a delicate, but impersonalized, sentiment is clothed in brilliant wit; of epistles to friends, where his wit is made still better use of; of meditative elegies in (roughly) the style of Gray. The longest and perhaps the best of all these early poems is *Feasts*, where an epicurean praise of the joys of the table is delicately mingled with a wistful melancholy. This background of melancholy gradually found more original forms of expression, and was ultimately transformed into the philosophical pessimism of the mature Baratynsky.

In his mature work (which includes all his short poems written after 1829) Baratynsky is a poet of thought, perhaps of all the poets of the "stupid nineteenth century" the one who made the best use of thought as a material for poetry. This made him alien to his younger contemporaries and to all the later part of the century, which identified poetry with sentiment. His poetry is, as it were, a short cut from the wit of the eighteenth-century poets to the metaphysical ambitions of the twentieth (in terms of English poetry, from Pope to T. S. Eliot). As in his earlier work he excelled in the lighter forms of (serious) wit, his later work is saturated with wit in the higher sense, which in his case would not be exactly the sense given to the word either by Donne or by Pope, but would be necessarily included in any definition of poetic wit broad

enough to include both Pope and Donne. Baratynsky's poetry is intellectual in content, but the intellectual content is treated poetically; it is really transformed into poetry. His style is classical. It always remained fundamentally eighteenth century, much more so than Pushkin's. But in his effort to give his thought the tersest and most concentrated statement he sometimes becomes obscure by sheer dint of compression. In his later work especially, he liked pushing the omission of the inessential as far as possible, and would jump the links in his reasoning, as well as links in his sentence. He had not that divine, Mozartian lightness which produces the (false) impression that Pushkin's work cost him no labour—Baratynsky's labour is always clearly apparent to the reader; it gives his verse a certain air of brittleness which is at poles' ends from Pushkin's elasticity. But this is for the real lover of poetry precisely the special charm of Baratynsky, for one assists all the time at the hardly won, but always complete, victory of the master over the resistant material. Among other things, Baratynsky is one of the few Russian poets who were, in verse, masters of the complicated sentence, expanded by subordinate clauses and parentheses.

Baratynsky was a classicist in his manner, but his outlook was, if not romantic, at least semi-romantic. A great intellectualist, he was the victim of intellect, of analytic knowledge. He aspired after a fuller union with nature, after a more primitive spontaneity of mental life. He saw the steady, inexorable movement of mankind away from nature. The aspiration after a more organic and natural past is one of the main motives of Baratynsky's poetry. He symbolized it in the growing discord between nature's child—the poet—and the human herd, which were growing with every generation more absorbed by industrial cares. Hence the growing isolation of the poet in the modern world, where he is deprived of the popular response that met his highest inspirations in "the market places of the Greek towns." The only response in the modern world that greets the modern poet is that of his own rhymes (*Rhyme*, 1841). He turns away from poetry and seeks for a response from nature by planting trees (*On the Plantation of a Forest*,

1843). The future of industrialized and mechanized mankind will be brilliant and glorious in the nearest future, but universal happiness and peace will be bought at the cost of the loss of all the higher values of poetry (*The Last Poet*). And inevitably after an age of intellectual refinement humanity will lose its vital sap and die from sexual impotence. Then earth will be restored to her primeval majesty (*The Last Death*, 1827). This philosophy, allying itself to his profound temperamental melancholy, produced poems of extraordinary majesty, which can compare with nothing in the poetry of pessimism, except Leopardi. Such is the crushing majesty of that long ode to dejection, *Autumn* (1838). Here and in other poems (as in the famous *Death*, 1833) Baratynsky is splendidly rhetorical in the grandest manner of classicism, though with a pronouncedly personal accent. But always he is intellectual, and the imaginative wit of these great odes never allows them to be trite or commonplace. In other poems he displays an almost Spinozan power of reasoning, as in *On the Death of Goethe* (1832), which is constructed like a syllogism, but so rich in poetry that even the nineteenth century could not miss it and it went through all the anthologies.

As Baratynsky's poetry is quite unknown in England and as, being intellectual, he is less hopelessly untranslatable, for even in the worst translation something remains of the intellectual movement, I shall venture a prose translation of three poems of his later years. They are all taken from his last volume, *Twilight*.

What use are ye, Days! The earthly world will not change its phenomena. All are familiar, and the future betokens nothing but repetition.

Not in vain hast thou tossed and seethed, hurrying on in thy development—thou hast run thy race before the body, foolish soul!

And having long ago brought to a close the narrow circle of sublunar impressions, lulled by the breath of ever-repeating dreams, thou dozest; whilst it *

* *I. e.* the body; the distinction of genders allows a freer use of the personal pronoun referring to a distant noun, and Baratynsky makes full use of this facility.

Stupidly gazes on, watching the morning come, uselessly to replace the night; and the fruitless evening drop into night's darkness —the crown of an empty day.

Ideas, and nothing but ideas! Poor artist of language, thou art their votary! thou canst have no oblivion. Humanity and the Universe, and Death, and Life, and Truth unveiled—thou canst not escape from their presence. Chisel! Harp!* Brush! Happy he who is attracted by them, the sensuous, and passes not their limits. He can enjoy the feast of life. But before thee, as before a naked sword, Thought, trenchant ray! withers earthly life.

Blessed is he who has announced a holy message! But he may not have perished in the abyss of vice who revealed to us some unrighteous twist of human hearts. Two provinces—of light and of darkness—we are equally eager to investigate. The apple falls from the apple-tree—and lo! man has grasped the law of the heavens! Thus sometimes does a single glimpse initiate us to all the hideous meaning of vice.

7. YAZYKOV

The third major poet of the twenties was Nikolay Mikhaylovich Yazykov. He was born in 1803, in Simbirsk, the town of Karamzin and Goncharov. Like Baratynsky he was sponsored in literature by Delvig. His first verses appeared in print in 1822. The same year he went to the (then German) University of Dorpat in Lievland, where he remained for five years without taking a degree, spending his time in the traditional carousings and amours of German undergraduates. The riotously anacreontic verse he wrote in Dorpat in praise of the student's merry life made him famous. For his summer vacations he went from Dorpat to Trigorskoye, where he met Pushkin. After leaving Dorpat he lived between Moscow and his Simbirsk estate. He became intimate with the nationalist and Slavophil circles of Moscow, and as he was of a distinctly unintellectual turn of mind, their nationalism was reflected in him in the form of a very crude jingoism. His poetry was highly

* The original has "organ."

esteemed by the Slavophils and by the "poets' party"—but the young idealists dismissed it as contemptibly lacking in ideas. This embittered Yazykov, and in his later years he wrote some rather tasteless attacks on his enemies. His health, undermined by his Dorpat excesses, began to fail very early, and from about 1835 he was a permanent sufferer from gout and dyspepsia, and a restless wanderer from one health resort to another. The Genoese Riviera, Nice, Gastein, and other German *Kurorte* are the frequent background of his later verse. He died in 1846.

Gogol, whose favourite poet Yazykov was, said of him, playing on his name (*yazyk*, tongue, language): "Not in vain was he given such a name; he is master of his language as an Arab is of his fiery steed." Pushkin protested that the Castalian fount of which Yazykov drank ran not with water, but with champagne. The almost physical intoxication produced by the verse of Yazykov is an experience familiar to his readers. His poetry is cold and seething like champagne, or like a mineral spring. There is no human significance in it. Its force lies not in what it means, but in what it is. The tremendous—physical or nervous—momentum of his verse is a thing that can hardly be paralleled elsewhere. It must not be imagined, however, that he was a fountain of word torrents like Hugo or Swinburne. In all this verbal rush there is a restraint and a master's grip that proves Yazykov the true contemporary of Pushkin and Baratynsky. He is never garrulous or vapid; his verse is as saturated as that of either of his elder fellow craftsmen. His early poetry is devoted to the praise of wine and merry-making, and was particularly appreciated by his contemporaries. But the intoxication of his rhythms is perhaps even more potent where the subject is less obviously Bacchic. It may easily be imagined what he could make of such a subject as *A Waterfall* (1828), but his more peaceful nature poems (*Trigorskoye*, and the one on Lake Peipus) are as vivid and impulsive in their cold crystalline splendour. Of course Yazykov had no sympathy with nature. It was purely a dazzling vision on his retina transformed into a dazzling rush of words. In his power of seeing nature as an orgy of

light and colour he approaches Derzhavin, but he had neither the barbaric ruggedness nor the spontaneous and naïve humanity of the older bard. His later poems are on the whole superior to his earlier ones. His Slavophil and reactionary effusions are rather second-rate (he had few brains and no high seriousness), but some of the elegies, written in a state of dejection during his sufferings, have genuine human feeling in them without losing any of his verbal splendour. But his best and greatest poems must be accepted as purely verbal magnificences: such are the stanzas to "T.D." with their splendidly sensual opening, and equally splendid ending on a note of disinterested enthusiasm; the quaint lines comparing Malaga, the wine of the old, to champagne; the famous *Earthquake* (1844), where his exuberance, rigorously channelled and chastened, attains a particularly inevitable magnificence; and perhaps best of all the lines *To the Rhine* (1840), where he greets the German stream in the name of the Volga and all her tributaries: the enumeration of these tributaries, an uninterrupted catalogue of about fifty lines, is one of the greatest triumphs of Russian verbal art, and an unsurpassed record of long breath—the recitation of the poem is the most difficult, and, if successful, should be the most glorious achievement of the poetry reciter.

8. METAPHYSICAL POETS

The poets of the twenties formed a real, and, for all its diversity, united movement. They may be styled a school. They are usually referred to as "the Pushkin Pleiad" (*Pushkinskaya Pleyada*). But there were also poets who stood outside the movement and consequently remained more or less unrecognized by their contemporaries. Such were Fedor Glinka and Wilhelm Küchelbecker, of whom the former was almost a major, and the latter, if an imperfect, a very individual poet.

Fedor Nikolayevich Glínka (1788–1880) was a cousin of the great composer. He was one of the very few Russian poets who devoted themselves almost exclusively to religious poetry. His originality and independence from contemporary example

is startlingly great. Like the other poets of his time, Glinka was a careful and conscientious craftsman. But his poetry is mystical, and, though his religion was strictly Orthodox, his mysticism was in substance of a Protestant type. His style is distinctly akin to that of the great Anglican mystics, Herbert and Vaughan. It is at once realistic and sublime. His metaphors are usually realistic, sometimes disconcertingly martial. There is a great swing and go in his verse, when he speaks of the last judgment, or when he paraphrases the prophets. He was never appreciated at his right value, and during his last years he was a favourite target for the ridicule of the young critics. He has not yet been entirely rediscovered, but such a rediscovery is one of the maturest possibilities of Russian literary judgment.

Another poet who was out of joint with the times was Pushkin's schoolfellow Wilhelm Küchelbecker (1797–1846). Though of German blood, he was the most ardent of Russian patriots, and though in reality the most advanced of the romanticists, he insisted on calling himself an extreme literary conservative and a supporter of Admiral Shishkov. He was an enthusiastic idealist, joined in the December conspiracy, and spent the last twenty years of his life in prison and in Siberia. He was a Quixotic figure, ridiculous in appearance and behaviour, but all who knew him had a warm affection for him, and Pushkin, who was one of his principal teasers, dedicated to him one of the best and sincerest stanzas of the *Lyceum Anniversary* of 1825.* In spite of his ridiculous appearance and comic enthusiasm Küchelbecker was a man of no small brains, and his short career as a literary critic (1824–5) gives him, together with Kireyevsky, the first place among the critics of the Golden Age. It was courageous in 1825 to write long and enthusiastic articles on Shikhmatov, and it was proof of a singular force of judgment to give equal praise to Shakspere and Racine while denying Byron a footing of equality with them. As a poet, Küchelbecker had a fine, pantheistic vision of the world, but did not succeed in giving it a definite

* Küchelbecker is the hero of Yuri Tynyanov's biographical novel *Kyukhlya* (1925), one of the best historical novels in the Russian language.

expression—like so much of the poetry of the later part of the century his poetry is an inchoate world awaiting a builder. Only occasionally did he hit on an adequate form and then produced a poem of real beauty. One of these is the noble elegy on the death of Pushkin, beginning with the only one of his verses that is familiar to most poetry readers:

> Happy is he who fell, like the young Achilles,
> Beautiful, daring, vigorous, majestic,
> In the middle of a career of triumphs and glory,
> And full of unexhausted strength.

It is a *Lament of the Makaris*, closing the Golden Age of Russian poetry, curiously near in time, if not in tone, to Wordsworth's *Extempore Effusion.*

Küchelbecker's miscellany *Mnemosyne* (1824–5) was the first publication to give place to the young Idealists, who were to introduce into Russia the cult of Goethe and the metaphysics of Schelling. They were young men, for the most part of good family and exceptionally good education, who lived in Moscow and formed a sort of friendly society. They called themselves the Wisdom Lovers (*lyubomudry*—Slavonic translation of *philosophoi*). They included Prince Vladimir Odoyevsky, Pogodin, Shevyrev, Khomyakov, Ivan Kireyevsky, all of them names we shall meet with again in the following chapter, but their leader was a man whose shortlived career necessarily belongs to the twenties. This was Dmitri Vladimirovich Venevítinov, a distant cousin of Pushkin. Born in 1805, he died in 1827, in his twenty-second year, carrying away with him one of the greatest hopes of Russian literature. His death was accidental—he caught a chill when driving home from a ball in the winter. It is impossible to predict what might not have come of him. He was a man of dazzling abundance of gifts, a strong brain, a born metaphysician, a mature and lofty poet at twenty-one. His thirst for knowledge was truly Faustian, and his capacity of acquiring it reminiscent of Pico. At the same time he was a virile, attractive young man, who loved all the pleasures of life. There was also in him an essential sanity and balance of all the functions of soul and body that

remind one of Goethe. His literary remains are not extensive. His few philosophical and critical articles introduce us for the first time to a Russian mentality, modified by the grafting on it of German idealism. But in these propylæa of a new learning there is a sane coolness and broadness of grasp for which we shall look in vain in his successors, the Idealists of the thirties. His poetry is almost perfect. Its style is based on Pushkin's and Zhukovsky's, but with an individual mastery of his own. His diction is very pure, and his rhythms pure and majestic. His most characteristic poems are philosophical.

9. THE THEATRE

The classical three-unities tragedy in Alexandrines died out after Ozerov, but classical comedy survived, and even had a revival. However, with the single exception of the great but isolated comedy of Griboyedov, it produced nothing to compare with the better plays of the eighteenth century. The playwrights worked for the theatre and for their own day—not for literature and time. Some of these plays are amusing, especially those where the dramatists (all of them conservatives and classicists) satirized the Karamzinians and the romanticists (e. g. Shakhovskoy's *Lipetsk Spa* and Griboyedov's *The Student*), but all are insignificant, frankly and unambitiously so. The futility and absence of serious literary interests in all this world of comedy is admirably pictured in Aksakov's *Literary and Theatrical Reminiscences*. The chief figures of this theatre were the versatile and prolific Prince Alexander Shakhovskóy (1777-1846); Mikhail Nikolayevich Zagóskin (1789–1852), who afterwards became more famous as a "Waverley" novelist; Nikolay Ivanovich Khmelnítsky (1789–1846); and Alexander Ivanovich Písarev (1803–1828), the greatest master of stage-craft among them, and a particular friend of Aksakov's. Khmelnitsky and Pisarev excelled chiefly in the vaudeville, a dramatic form the craze for which in Russia began about 1820 and reached its maximum about 1840. Griboyedov in his early comedies was nothing but a furnisher of stageable

plays: they have curiously little in common with the one great comedy that makes him a classic almost comparable with Pushkin.

10. GRIBOYEDOV

Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyédov was born in Moscow on 4 January 1795. He received an exceptionally brilliant education. By the age of seventeen he had taken degrees at the University of Moscow in science and in law, and was preparing for a doctorate when his studies were interrupted by the invasion of Napoleon. He enlisted in a cavalry regiment, but saw no fighting. In 1815 he was allowed to leave the service and went to Petersburg, where he became a clerk in the Foreign Office. Griboyedov plunged eagerly into the animated and excited post-war life of the capital. The theatre became (as it was to so many of his contemporaries) the centre of his interests. He wrote and staged indifferent comedies, and courted actresses. He mixed in the revolutionary circles and was received a freemason. In the literary quarrels he sided with the Shishkovists. He easily acquired the reputation of being one of the cleverest men and greatest wits in Russia. All the time he did serious work at the Foreign Office; so that when a particularly reliable official was wanted to go as secretary to a mission in Persia, the post was offered Griboyedov. He accepted it, all the more readily as he had been deeply impressed by a duel in which he had just taken part. It was the famous *partie-carrée* duel between Zavadovsky and Griboyedov on the one side, and Sheremetev and Yakubovich on the other. Sheremetev had been killed by Zavadovsky, himself heavily wounded. It was to be continued by the seconds, Griboyedov and Yakubovich, who met a year later in Tiflis. Griboyedov was then wounded in the hand, and one of his fingers remained always crooked.

Griboyedov passed the years 1818–25 partly in Tiflis, partly in Persia. He made friends with the famous "Proconsul" of the Caucasus, General Ermolov, the most popular office-holder of the day and one of the most remarkable, who liked in Griboye-

dov a kindred spirit and made him his secretary. It was in Tiflis in 1822–3 that Griboyedov wrote his great comedy *Woe from Wit*. Only the final touches were added during his two years' leave of absence in Moscow and Petersburg (1823–5). *Woe from Wit* was not passed by the censorship for the stage, and only portions of it were allowed to appear in an almanac for 1825. But it was read out by the author to "all Moscow" and to "all Petersburg" and circulated in innumerable copies. So it was as good as published in 1825.

In the end of that year Griboyedov had to return to Ermolov's head-quarters in the Caucasus. But he did not remain there long. Immediately after the Revolt of 14th December a courier was sent to arrest him. It is reported that Ermolov (who was popular with the Decembrists) warned Griboyedov of the impending arrest and gave him time to destroy compromising papers. Griboyedov was brought to Petersburg and placed under custody. He was highly incensed by the arrest and wrote to Nicholas a vehement letter couched in such language that the Emperor's A.D.C. General did not dare present it to him. At the inquiry Griboyedov behaved with consistent firmness. In spite of his close connexions with many of the rebels he succeeded in exculpating himself. He was set free, and, as a compensation for the trouble he had undergone, he was given promotion and a year's salary. The affair, however, remains somewhat mysterious, for it is practically certain that Griboyedov was not innocent in the matter.

He now returned to the Caucasus, where in the mean time hostilities had begun with Persia. Ermolov, disliked and distrusted by Nicholas, had had to resign, but the new Viceroy, the Emperor's particular favourite and intimate friend, Paskevitch, was Griboyedov's cousin by marriage, and the relations of the two were of the most cordial. He joined Paskevich's head-quarters at the front, and accompanied him throughout the war. He negotiated the Peace of Turkmanchai (10 February 1828) and took the treaty to Petersburg for ratification. His arrival at the capital was met with salvoes from the fortress, he was given high rewards, and appointed Russian Minister to Persia. On his way back, in Tiflis, he fell in love

with a sixteen-year-old Georgian girl, Princess Nina Chavchavadze, and married her. At the height of happiness he set off with his young bride to Tabriz, whence he was to supervise the fulfilment of the treaty by the Persians.

This was no easy and no agreeable task. The treaty provided for the payment of a large contribution, and for the repatriation of all Christian prisoners; i. e., principally, Armenian women in Persian harems. The former clause was impracticable, as Persia was insolvent; the latter was felt by the Persians as a profound insult to the sanctity of the harem, a principal foundation of their religious polity. In December 1828 Griboyedov went to Teheran to negotiate more directly with the Shah, leaving his wife in Tabriz in the care of the wife of the British Minister. In Teheran Griboyedov met with a general exasperation against the clause concerning the extradition of Christian women. He at once realized (and wrote in his dispatches) that the Russian demands were excessive, but he enforced them with conscientious energy and without respect for oriental susceptibilities. Before long a popular movement was fomented against him by Allayar-Khan, a kinsman of the Shah, from whose harem two Christian women had taken refuge in the Russian legation, in accordance with the treaty. On 30 January a crowd, incited by Allayar-Khan, attacked the legation, and all the inmates (except one) were massacred. Griboyedov fell fighting. His stripped and mangled body, it is reported, could be recognized only owing to his crooked finger, mutilated in the duel with Yakubovich. His widow on hearing of his death gave premature birth to a child, who died a few hours later. She lived another thirty years after her husband's death, rejecting all suitors and winning universal admiration by her fidelity to his memory.

Griboyedov is a *homo unius libri.* This book is the great comedy *Gore ot Uma—Woe from Wit,* or, as Professor Pares prefers to English the title, *The Misfortune of Being Clever.* His other comedies, one of which was written after *Gore ot Uma,* are negligible, and curiously unlike it. The fragments left us of *The Georgian Night,* a social tragedy of Georgian history he was working at in his last years, are also very dis-

appointing. Of his few lyrics some are quite good, but they are only intimations of unrealized possibilities. More important are his letters, which are among the best in the language. It is they that reveal to us the man, but the great imaginative writer is revealed only in *Gore ot Uma.*

Gore ot Uma belongs to the classical school of comedy—its principal antecedents are in Molière. Like Fonvizin before him and like the founders of the Russian realistic tradition after him, Griboyedov lays far greater stress on the characters and his dialogue than on his plot. The comedy is loosely constructed. Many scenes do not advance the action, and are only introduced for the sake of character painting. But in the dialogue and in the character drawing Griboyedov is supreme and unique. The dialogue is in rhymed verse, in iambic lines of variable length—a metre that was introduced into Russia by the fabulists as the equivalent of La Fontaine's *vers libre,* and that had reached a high degree of perfection in the hands of Krylov. Griboyedov's dialogue is a continuous *tour de force.* It always attempts and achieves the impossible: the squeezing of everyday conversation into a rebellious metrical form. Griboyedov seemed to multiply difficulties on purpose. He was, for instance, alone in his age to use unexpected, sonorous, punning rhymes. There is just enough toughness and angularity in his verse constantly to remind the reader of the pains undergone and the difficulties triumphantly overcome by the poet. It is a noble toughness: the mark left by the master craftsman on the resistant material. In spite of the fetters of the metrical form Griboyedov's dialogue has the natural rhythm of conversation, and is more easily colloquial than any prose. It is full of wit, variety, and character, and a veritable store-book of the best spoken Russian of a period when the speech of the upper classes had not yet been disfigured and emasculated by schoolmastery and grammar. Almost every other line of the comedy has become part of the language, and proverbs from Griboyedov are as numerous as proverbs from Krylov. For epigram, repartee, terse and concise wit, Griboyedov has no rivals in Russian and is superior even to Krylov.

In the art of character drawing Griboyedov is also unique.

He had a quality that he inherited from the classicists, and which was not possessed by any other Russian realist. He shares it with the great masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—with Molière and Fielding—and of all nineteenth-century writers, I think, with Thackeray alone. It is a certain universality which makes Tartuffe and Squire Western and Miss Crawley something more than mere individualities. They are persons, but they are also *types*—archetypes or quintessences of humanity, endowed with all we have of life and individuality, but endowed also with a super-individual existence, like that of the Platonic ideas, or of the *universalia* of the schoolmen. This is a rare art—perhaps the rarest of all; and of all Russian writers Griboyedov possessed it in the highest degree. This is not to say that they are not alive; they are, and very lively too, but they have a life more durable and universal than our own. They are stamped in the really common clay of humanity. Famusov, the father, the head of an important department, the born conservative of all time, the cynical and placid philosopher of good digestion, the pillar of stable society; Molchalin, the secretary, the sneak who plays whist with old ladies, pets their dogs, and acts the lover to his patron's daughter; Repetilov, the orator of the coffee-room and of the club, burning for freedom and stinking of liquor, the witless admirer of wit, and the bosom-friend of all his acquaintances. All, down to the most episodic, have the same perfection of finish and clearness of outline. The only exceptions are the two protagonists, Sophia and Chatsky. Unlike the rest they are not meant satirically, and as characters they may be underdone. And yet the play owes much of its unique charm to them. Sophia is not a type, but she is a person. She is a rare phenomenon in classical comedy: a heroine that is neither idealized nor caricatured. There is a strange, drily romantic flavour in her, with her fixity of purpose, her ready wit, and her deep, but reticent, passionateness. She is the principal *active* force in the play, and the plot is advanced mainly by her actions.

Chatsky has often been criticized as irrelevantly eloquent. There is no sense of fitness in his harangues to Famusov and

his set, and there may be mistakes of proportion in Griboyedov's conception of him. But in spite of this, Chatsky is the principal thing in the play. He is its imaginative and emotional focus, its yeast and its zest. Not only is all the best wit put into his mouth, but he gives the tone to the whole performance. His generous, if vague, revolt against the vegetably selfish world of Famusovs and Molchalins is its real spirit. His exhilarating, youthful idealism, his go, his *élan*, infect and brace you. He is of the family of Romeo; and it is significant that, in spite of all his apparent lack of clear-cut personality, his part is the traditional touchstone for a Russian actor. Great Chatskys are as rare and as highly valued in Russia as are great Hamlets.

11. THE POETS' PROSE

The high-water mark of French linguistic influence in Russia was reached in the reign of Alexander I. All the members of the educated gentry who were brought up during that reign knew French as well as, or better than, Russian. The same conditions obtained for the middle and provincial gentry: Pushkin is careful to record that Tatiana wrote her famous letter to Onegin in French, for, as he says, "to this day our proud language has not been broken to postal prose." To break it was one of the principal tasks of the poets and wits of the Arzamas, and of the other men of the Poets' and Gentlemen's party. Letter-writing between 1815 and 1830 was, for the poets, an important branch of their literary activity. They made it an art. And the Golden Age of poetry is also the Golden Age of letter-writing.

Pushkin is as much the greatest Russian letter-writer as he is the greatest poet. His "postal prose" is an ever fresh source of delight to all who love good Russian. It is the language of everyday conversation, only refined in the laboratory of a great artistic mind. For flexibility, grace, and freshness Pushkin's epistolary Russian has no equals. Besides their language, his letters are a mine of keen wit, sound judgment, and good criticism. But Pushkin *never* speaks in them of his feel-

ings, neither to his nearest friends, nor to his wife. The only emotions he ever gives vent to are impatience and indignation. This gives his letters a particularly healthy and bracing atmosphere.

Griboyedov stands next to Pushkin as a letter-writer. His Russian is terse and more nervous than Pushkin's. It is full of the dry, pungent wit of *Gore ot Uma*, and of a canalized and disciplined passionateness. Griboyedov always knows his mind, and says what he thinks in a direct and straight manner. If Pushkin's letters have no equal for flexibility and freshness, Griboyedov is first among Russian writers for pointed and vigorous statement.

Another remarkable body of epistolary Russian is contained in the correspondence of Vyazemsky with Alexander Ivanovich Turgenev (1785–1846)—a friend of all the Arzamasians and one of the most intelligent men of the period. The correspondence forms a sort of running commentary on the Russian literature and life of the time.

In their published prose the poets of the Golden Age continued the work of Karamzin, who, though his reform had been accepted, had not succeeded in creating a style of literary prose that would be universally applicable. The formation of such a style was one of the most difficult tasks before the poets, and here again French was in the way. Pushkin confessed that it was easier for him to express himself in French than in Russian where he had anything to say in prose that was not merely descriptive of fact. The poets applied themselves to their task with painstaking industry. But they failed to establish a canon of Russian prose for the succeeding ages, and all their work was undone by the journalists of the thirties, who are the real founders of modern Russian prose.

The elder generation of poets followed closely Karamzin's example. Zhukovsky, both in his early stories and in his later moral essays, wrote fluent, agreeable, but somewhat emasculated and placid, prose. Batyushkov in his essays tried to italianate Russian prose as he had done Russian verse. Vyazemsky and Davydov introduced into literature the manner of their epistolary prose. Davydov's work in prose consists of an *Es-*

say towards a Theory of Guerrilla Warfare (1821), an autobiography prefixed to the edition of his poems of 1832, and a series of recollections of his military life. They reveal him a prose writer of genuine originality. In his autobiography he indulges in a veritable orgy of puns and jokes, not always in the best taste. In his military writings he is fresh, vigorous, and racy, and his memoirs contain some of the best military reading in the language.

Vyazemsky is also sometimes exaggeratedly witty: he never had the heart to refrain from a pun when he saw the opportunity of making one. But vigour and raciness are as ubiquitous in his prose as in Davydov's. His criticism (chiefly belonging to the twenties) was brilliant, but superficial: clever, but unimaginative. His best is contained in the admirable anecdotes of his *Old Notebook*, an inexhaustible mine of sparkling and often wonderful information on the great and small men of the early nineteenth century.

The anecdote was a favourite form in the times of Pushkin, and the great poet himself was a devotee to the art. The anecdotes contained in his (naturally posthumous) *Table Talk* (the title is in English) are masterpieces of the kind, and in a Russian more closely akin to that of his letters than that of his literary prose.

Of the other poets Baratynsky wrote very little prose, but this little contains a quite disproportionate amount of the best things ever said in Russian on the subject of poetry. Two of his utterances should be especially remembered: his definition of lyrical poetry as "the fullest awareness of a given moment," and his remark that good poetry is rare because two qualities, as a rule mutually exclusive, are necessary to the making of a poet—"the fire of creative imagination and the coldness of controlling reason."

12. THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

The Russian novel continued vegetating rather half-heartedly until in 1829 there was a sudden outburst of novel writing. In that year the notorious Tadeusz Bulharyn (v. *infra*) pub-

lished his moralizing picaresque novel *Ivan Vyzhigin*, which had a record sale; and the same year Michael Nikolaevich Zagóskin (1792–1853), who had already won a reputation as a comedy writer, published the first Russian novel in the style of Scott, *Yuri Miloslavsky, or the Russians in 1612*. It is a story of the Time of Troubles, when the Poles occupied Moscow, and of the victory of the national forces. In spite of its conventionality, of its lack of real historical colour, of its crude nationalism and cardboard psychology, it is a very good romance of its kind. Its immediate success was enormous and it remained deservedly popular among the less fastidious readers for almost a century. *Yuri Miloslavsky* set the fashion for "Waverley" novels, and the number of them turned out in Russia within the next ten or fifteen years was very great.

Zagoskin's own later novels, all in the same official-patriotic spirit, did not rival the popularity of his first. The other novelists did not approach him, with the exception of Ivan Ivanovich Lazhéchnikov (1792–1869), who is generally regarded as the best of the Russian Scottists. His three novels—*The Last Recruit* (1831), *The Ice House* (1835), and *The Heretic* (1838)—can still be read with more unqualified pleasure than even *Yuri Miloslavsky*. Lazhechnikov's knowledge of the past is greater. His characters are more complex and more alive, and his moral sense, as clear-cut as Zagoskin's, is less conventional, and more generous. Like Zagoskin's, all Lazhechnikov's novels are inspired by patriotism, but, unlike Zagoskin's, his is an open-minded patriotism, compatible with a sense of fairness, with a hatred of tyranny, and with a high sense of human dignity.

Another kind of romanticism is discernible in the works of Alexey Perovsky (1787–1836), who wrote under the pseudonym of Anton Pogorelsky, and was the only man of the Poets' and Gentlemen's party who made a reputation solely by his fiction. His principal work is *The Convent Girl* (*Monastyrka*, 1828). It is a charmingly humorous (though still rather left-handed) picture of the manners of the provincial, Ukrainian gentry, with an ideal, naïve, but courageous, heroine (a distant reflec-

tion of Sophia Western) and a rather complicated and improbable plot. The novel is obviously influenced by Fielding, but there is also an admixture of a mild and domestic romanticism. In his shorter stories Pogorelsky is more romantic and fantastic. The best of them, *The Black Hen*, is a really delightful story. It is plainly as dependent on Hoffmann's *Nutcracker* as *The Convent Girl* is on *Tom Jones*. Tolstoy mentions it as the book that produced the strongest impression on him in his childhood.

The most brilliant of these early novelists was Alexander Alexandrovich Bestuzhev (1797–1837). He served as an officer in the dragoon guards and was co-editor with Ryleyev of the early miscellany the *Polar Star*. He was one of the Decembrists, and in 1826 was sentenced to exile in the farthest parts of Siberia. In 1829 he was transferred to the Caucasus as a private soldier. There he was able to resume his literary activity, and his best and best-known novels were published in the early thirties over the signature of A. Marlinsky. As a soldier he soon became noted for exceptional bravery. He was recommended for promotion and for the St. George's Cross, but the same year he was charged with the murder of his mistress, and, though the inquest failed to prove his guilt, the promotion and the cross were withheld. This incident left a profound mark on his mind. He ceased writing and lost all interest in life. He was killed in 1837. At the storming of Adler (on the Black Sea coast) he was, literally, hewn to pieces by the Circassians.

Bestuzhev was a poet of no mean talent. But it was his novels and stories that fascinated the public of the thirties. His manner, though showy and superficial, is certainly brilliant. His sparkling verbal imagination makes him show very brightly on the somewhat drab background of Zagoskin or Pogorelsky. His dialogue is especially brilliant, a constant battledore and shuttlecock of pithy epigram and witty repartee. His superficially passionate heroes, with their Byronic pose, are rather cheap. But the stories are thrilling, and the style keeps the reader in constant excitement. His best novel is *Ammalat Bek*

(1831), a story of the Caucasian war. It contains the splendid *Songs of Death* of the mountaineers, a thing unequalled of its kind in the language.

13. THE PROSE OF PUSHKIN

Pushkin was the first in Russia to write *permanent* fiction, the first really original Russian novelist. But his place in the history of the Russian novel is not comparable to his place in the history of Russian literature as a whole, and his prose, however perfect some of his stories and however unique his total achievement, is not of the same order of greatness as his poetry. A principal difference between his poetry and his prose is that he was primarily a poet, and that in verse he spoke his natural language, of which he himself was the supreme standard and judge; while prose was to him a foreign tongue, acquired by more or less laborious learning. He succeeded in mastering the idiom and the intonation of this foreign tongue, and his Parnassian accent can be discerned only by a trained ear. But there is always in his prose a sense of constraint, a lack of freedom, a harking back to some outer rule, which is never the case with his poetry. Not that he did not expend infinitely more work on a line of verse than he did on a line of prose. But this work was, as it were, self-generating, and the final effect was always one of native and unfettered freedom.

It was only after 1830 that Pushkin turned most of his attention to prose. But from the very beginning he had fixed his mind on what it was to be like. In 1822 he wrote in a notebook: "Voltaire may be regarded as an excellent example of sensible style. . . . Precision, tidiness, these are the prime merits of prose. It demands matter and matter, brilliant expressions are of no use to it; poetry is another business." Pushkin's literary prose is founded on the example of the French. It is a rational, analytical, intentionally bald prose, pruned of all irrelevant ornament, and almost affected in its simplicity. The prose one is most tempted to compare it to is Cæsar's. Pushkin's own preference went to Voltaire, but, however comparable to Voltaire in elegance and purity, Push-

kin's prose lacks the free, impulsive vivacity and unfettered swiftness of the great Frenchman's. On the whole the eighteenth-century atmosphere common to the whole of Pushkin's work is nowhere more apparent than in his stories, even in those where, like others of his generation, he was influenced by the example of Scott and Hoffmann.

His first attempt at fiction was the unfinished historical novel *The Nigger of Peter the Great* (1828). It was to be the story of his grandsire Gannibal. It remained unfinished, and only two fragments from it were published during his lifetime.

In the autumn of 1830, during his seclusion at Boldino, Pushkin wrote the five short stories which in the next year appeared without his name under the title of *Tales by Belkin.* If not the best, they are in many ways his most characteristic stories. Nowhere did he carry further the principles of detachment, restraint, and self-limitation. The tales are told by a simple, provincial squire: a device to justify the story-teller's impersonality. There is no human, no psychological or descriptive, interest in the stories. They are pure, unadulterated narrative, anecdotes raised to the rank of serious art by the seriousness of the artistic process. As pure narrative they are unsurpassed in Russian literature except by Pushkin himself in *The Queen of Spades.* They were met by contemporaries with amazed disappointment, and only very gradually have they become part of the acknowledged masterpieces of Pushkin. The figure of the supposed author, Belkin himself, barely outlined in the preface of the *Tales,* was more fully developed in the unpublished posthumous *History of the Manor of Goryukhino,* one of the most remarkable of Pushkin's prose works. It is also one of the most complex—it is at once a parody of Polevoy's sciolist and pretentious *History of the Russian People,* a Swiftian satire of the whole social order based on serfdom, and the portrait of one of the most charming characters in the whole of Russian fiction, the simple-minded, naïvely and shyly ambitious Ivan Petrovich Belkin.

After 1831 Pushkin wrote more prose than verse. Only three stories (including *The Captain's Daughter* and *The Queen of Spades*) were completed and printed. But numerous

fragments in various states of completion have been preserved and were published posthumously. They include several alternative beginnings for the story that was to introduce the poem of *Cleopatra* (one of these contains the highly interesting character sketch of Charsky, the poet who from motives of social vanity and reserve does not want to be considered a poet); and *Dubrovsky*, an almost completed robber-novel with a social background. Had it been finished, it would have been the best Russian novel of action. It is refreshingly (and very consciously) melodramatic, with a virtuous gentleman Robin Hood and an ideal heroine. Like *Goryukhino* it is full of satire. The figures of the two great noblemen, Troyekurov and Vereysky—one a rude, old-world bully, the other a Frenchified and refined egoist—are among the glories of the portrait gallery of Russian fiction.

The only full-sized novel Pushkin completed and published during his lifetime is *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), a story of the Pugachev Rebellion (the great rising of the lower classes in East Russia in 1773). It belongs to the school of Scott in its treatment of the past, but it is curiously unlike any Waverley novel. It is about a fifth of the size of an average Scott novel. The manner is terse, precise, economical, though somewhat more spacious and leisurely than in any other of Pushkin's stories. There is in it, as in *Dubrovsky*, a zest of orthodox melodrama—in the figure of the rebel-leader himself and in the frankly conventional character of the villain (the only villain in Pushkin), Shvabrin. It is full of delightful humour, as in the scene of the hero's duel with Shvabrin, and the refusal of the old garrison officer risen from the ranks to understand the use of a duel. But the best thing in the novel are the characters: Captain Mironov and his wife, charming figures of idyllic comedy in time of peace, who, when the rebels come, suddenly reveal an unpretending, modest, as it were casual, courage and die as heroes. Then there is Savelyich, the hero's old manservant, sincerely servile and unbendingly despotic. Besides *Evgeni Onegin*, *The Captain's Daughter* was the only work of Pushkin's that had a powerful influence on the next age—it contains all the essence of what Russian realism was

to become—though it is still a story told in the orthodox manner, as a story should be. Its understated, economical, discretely humorous realism is a striking contrast to another great historical novel that appeared within two years of it—the rhetorical, swollen, magnificent *Taras Bulba* of Gogol. *The Captain's Daughter* is Pushkin's most influential, but it is not his greatest or most characteristic, story—this distinction belongs to *The Queen of Spades* (1834). The story cannot be summarized. It is a masterpiece of concentration. Like *The Tales of Belkin* it is pure art and possesses no human interest except as a whole. For imaginative power it stands above everything else in Pushkin's prose. It is as tense as a compressed spring. There is a fierce romanticism in it—akin to that which inspired *The Hymn in Honour of the Plague* and *God Forbid that I Should Go Mad.* But the fantastically romantic subject has been canalized into a perfect. classical form, so economic and terse in its noble baldness that even Prosper Mérimée, that most fastidiously economical of French writers, had not the courage to translate it as it was, and introduced various embellishments and amplifications into his French version so as to give, he probably thought, more flesh to the too concise skeleton.

Pushkin was a first-class critic, and his serious critiques and reviews are admirable for the considered soundness of his judgments, and for the precise lucidity of his statement. His polemical journalism (in the *Literary Gazette*) is also, in its kind, unsurpassed. His neat, up-to-the-point, closely-aimed irony possessed a sting his enemies never forgot. His attacks against Bulharyn, the "reptile" journalist in the pay of the secret police, are admirably and calmly cruel. They contributed to the speedy suppression of the *Literary Gazette* by exasperating its sneakingly influential rival.

After 1832 Pushkin's principal occupation was, at least officially, history. His plan of writing a history of Peter the Great never matured; but in 1834 he published a *History of the Pugachev Rebellion* of 1773. It is a masterpiece of narrative literature, comparable to Cæsar's *Gallic War.* Its defect is one of information: Pushkin could not know much that

was essential to his subject. He was too much of an eighteenth-century classicist to treat history in terms of "mass movement" and "class struggles," but he saw very well and admirably exposed the social mainsprings of the great Rebellion. In 1836 he published *A Voyage to Arzrum*, which is an account of his journey to the Caucasus front in 1829, in which he reached the limits of noble and bare terseness.

14. THE GROWTH OF JOURNALISM

Besides its other claims to literary distinction the decade 1825–34 is important as the period when there begins the uninterrupted history of Russian journalism. In spite of the fact that the time was one of severe pressure on the part of the censorship, the journalists of this decade and the two following made a plucky stand for independence, if not in political, at least in general cultural questions. And it was owing to their efforts that a public opinion began to take shape. The Poets' and Gentlemen's party were not very successful in their journalistic ventures. Delvig's *Literary Gazette* (1830–1) was a splendid undertaking, but it was shut by the censorship. The same fate befell Ivan Kireyevsky's *The European* (1832). When in 1836 Pushkin started the *Sovremennik*, it was out of date and could not command a paying audience.

The journalists proper were despised and disliked by the "Gentlemen," who scarcely distinguished between the different varieties of those plebeians. But the difference was very substantial between the servile and abject Petersburg press, and the sometimes unkempt, but independent and enthusiastic, Moscow magazines. In Petersburg a monopoly of political information belonged to the daily *Northern Bee*, founded in 1825, by Tadeusz Bulharyn (in Russian spelling, Bulgarin, 1789–1859). Bulharyn was a Pole who had been with Napoleon's army in Moscow and after deserting led an obscurely picaresque existence till in the early twenties he became a sort of personage in the literary world. He was friends with many of the Decembrists, but the help he gave the Government by his

evidence against them made him a particular protégé of the secret police. During the reign of Nicholas I Bulharyn acquired the reputation of a vile sycophant, whom all honest men abhorred. He was a clever, but essentially vulgar, journalist. His paper had a far larger sale than any other. His influence was used to combat all that was young, talented, and independent. Pushkin, Gogol, Belinsky, Lermontov, and the natural school of the forties were in turn the enemies against whom he used all means, public and clandestine.

Very different was the Muscovite journalist Nicholas Polevoy (1796–1846). He was a self-made man, the son of a tradesman. He could never "become a gentleman" and the Gentlemen always despised him. But his enthusiasm (often misguided) did much to spread the new literature and to intensify Russian literary life. His magazine, the *Moscow Telegraph* (1825–34), was an enthusiastic, if undiscriminating, pioneer of romanticism. In 1834 the *Telegraph* was suppressed, for writing an unfavourable review of a patriotic play by Kukolnik. Polevoy was ruined. In his misfortunes he did not show himself a hero—he entered on a compromise with the Bulharyn party, and thus ceased to count in literature. But his memory after his death was deservedly reverenced by the new intelligentsia as that of a pioneer and, in a sense, a martyr.

Another pioneer of the intelligentsia was Nicholas Nadezhdin (1804–1856). Also a plebeian by birth, he began his career by publishing in 1828–30 in the organ of the reactionaries a series of scurrilous, though at times witty, articles against the Poets, where he confounded Pushkin and Baratynsky in a sweeping condemnation with their second-rate imitators. He attacked Russian romanticism from the point of view of the German romantic idealism of Schelling, denying the Russian pseudo-romanticism (as he was right in seeing it was) all ideological significance. In 1830 he submitted to the University of Moscow a thesis on romantic poetry.* In it he advocated a synthesis of classicism and romanticism. In 1831 he started a monthly magazine, the *Telescope*, where he continued

* The Latin title is *De Origine, natura, fatis poeseos quæ Romantica audit.*

his policy of belittling in the light of philosophical standards the achievement of Russian literature. In 1836 the magazine was suppressed for publishing Chaadayev's *Philosophical Letter*. Nadezhdin himself was exiled to the north, and not till some time afterwards allowed to return to Moscow. After that he renounced literature and devoted himself exclusively to his archæological and geographical studies.

The successor of Polevoy and Nadezhdin was Belinsky, the dictator of literary opinion from 1834 to 1848, and the father of the Russian intelligentsia.

CHAPTER V

THE AGE OF GOGOL

1. THE DECLINE OF POETRY

POETRY began early to decline from the high standards set up by the Golden Age. The harmony, the distinction, the restraint, the unerring mastery, of the great poets from Zhukovsky to Venevitinov was soon lost. The art of verse degenerated either into an empty and undistinguished tidiness, or into an equally hollow wit unsupported by inspiration, or into a formless rush of untransformed emotion. A veneer of polished versification, covering a void of imagination and substituted for the delicate mastery of the older generation, is the characteristic of all the younger poets who claimed to belong to the older "Poets' party." The Petersburg journalists encouraged poetry of a more showy and meretricious type. Its laureate was Vladimir Grigorievich Benedíktov (1807–1873), a clerk in the Ministry of Finance and for ten years the idol of all the romantically inclined officials, of every rank, throughout Russia. His first book appeared in 1835 and was almost the greatest immediate poetical success of the century. Though hardly a poet, he was not devoid of poetical wit in the seventeenth-century sense of the word. His method consisted in squeezing out of a striking metaphor or simile all it could give. A typical poem of his is the one on a sabre entitled *The Belle of Battles*, where he makes the most of the parallel between the unsheathed weapon and the naked woman. Later on, Benediktov gave up his conceits and developed into a polished versifier of the ordinary type.

Another group of poets had in common with Benediktov a love for external brilliancy in rhymes, images, and vocabulary, but were different from him by their higher seriousness. The

most notable of them were Khomyakóv (whose poetry I shall reserve for treatment in connexion with his other work), and Caroline Pávlova, née Janisch (1807–1893), the most interesting of the Russian "blues." When a young girl, she had been loved by the great Polish poet Mickiewicz, for whom she retained a lifelong romantic attachment. She afterwards was unhappily married to the novelist Nicholas Pavlov. Her literary *salon* was one of the most frequented in Moscow; but her talent was never appreciated by her friends, and she contrived to make herself a bore and a common laughing-stock. Her poetry is deeply attractive, both for the somewhat harsh, but unquestionable, excellence of her technique and for its profound and reticent pathos. She is by far the most outstanding Russian woman poet of the nineteenth century. "Manly," an unfair word, is the first epithet that occurs in speaking of the poetry of Pavlova. It has no trace of the gushing formlessness that is characteristic of the English poetesses of the early nineteenth century. She is a lesser poet than Mrs. Browning, but a more efficient craftsman. The main subject of her poetry is the courage of suppressed suffering. "Grin and bear it" is the pith of her best poems.

The most progressive and modern group among the poets of the thirties were those who rejected the formal discipline of the school of Zhukovsky and Pushkin, and aimed at developing the emotional and expressionist character of poetry at the expense of the artistic and formal. Lermontov in his early work must be reckoned as one of them. Of the minor poets who may be regarded as first proofs of Lermontov, the most notable were Prince Alexander Odóyevsky (1802–1839) and Alexander Ivanovich Polezháyev (1805–1838). Alexander Odoyevsky was a first cousin of Griboyedov and of the novelist Vladimir Odoyevsky. He served in the Horse Guards and took part in the Decembrist Revolt. He was deported to Siberia and afterwards sent as a private soldier to the Caucasus. He is chiefly remembered to-day for the elegy written on his death by Lermontov, the most beautiful dirge in the Russian language. His own poems were first published long after his death. Most of them are concerned with the sorrows of the

exile, but one of them, the well-known answer to Pushkin's famous *Epistle into Siberia* (1827), in which the great poet exhorted the exiled rebels not to lose their spirits, is an animated assertion of the undaunted spirit of revolt.

Polezhayev was the natural son of a squire of the name of Struysky, and thus—a *déclassé*. As a student of Moscow University he led a riotous life of drunkenness and debauchery, and described it in the burlesque poem *Sashka* (1825–6). The poem contained some passages expressive of liberal sentiment, and these much rather than its obscenity attracted the attention of the police. The matter reached Nicholas I, who was then in Moscow, fresh from the trial and execution of the Decembrists. Polezhayev was summoned into the Emperor's presence. Nicholas with his usual consummate stage-craft played the part of the kind chastising father—Polezhayev was to serve as a private soldier, but he was allowed to write direct to the Emperor if he had any grievances. This Polezhayev did very soon, for he had plenty of grievances, but the letters had no effect. He attempted to desert, was arrested for more than a year, narrowly escaped corporal punishment, and was told off to the Caucasus. Gradually Polezhayev sank into degradation—drank heavily and in his relations with the kind people who tried to lighten up his hopeless lot behaved with shameless cynicism. At the front, however, he gave proof of courage and was at last recommended for a commission, but the promotion arrived only after his death. Polezhayev was strongly influenced by Hugo and Byron, and romantic grandiloquence and gaudiness had a too great attraction for him. Looseness, turgidness, and garrulity are his besetting sins. Only a dozen or so of his shorter poems preserve his name in the treasury of Russian verse. There is in them a passionate force, a rhythmic rush, a romantic fire, that are his alone. He was particularly a master of rapid, *staccato* metres. All his best poems are concerned either with the lurid romance of oriental warfare or with the grim despair of his ruined life. His most famous poem is the remarkably effective *Song of the Sailor Doomed to Wreck* (or rather, "in the process of being wrecked"), in vigorous, three-syllabled lines, and *The Song of*

the Captive Iroquois—bound to the stake and calmly awaiting the protracted death his captors are preparing for him.

2. KOLTSOV

One of the most interesting developments of the thirties was the culmination of the school of literary folk-song in the work of Koltsov. The tradition of the artificial folk-song goes back to the eighteenth century. In the twenties it was brought to further perfection by the versatile Delvig, whose exquisitely artificial "Russian songs" (as the *genre* was called) were the most popular part of his work. Less artificial and more spontaneous are the beautiful songs of Nikolay Grigorievich Tsygánov (1797–1831), a wandering actor and the son of a serf. He had no contact with literary circles and, though the form of his "Russian songs" is dependent on the literary, not on the oral tradition, their spirit is genuinely popular and "folklore." They are personative, most of them placed in the mouth of a woman. Their symbolism, their imagery, their unsentimental sentiment, are all thoroughly popular and Russian. They were published posthumously in 1834, only a year before the publication of the first book of Koltsov.

Alexey Vasilievich Koltsóv was born in 1808 in Voronezh (South Central Russia). He was the son of a wholesale cattle dealer, a man of means, but who, being uneducated and not of gentle birth, belonged to the people. Much of Koltsov's boyhood and youth was spent in the Don steppes, accompanying his father's herds to distant markets. His education was desultory. He early began writing verse, which attracted the attention of Stankevich, the famous head of the idealist circle, and a wealthy landowner of the province of Voronezh. He introduced Koltsov to his Moscow friends. This resulted in a lasting friendship between Koltsov and Belinsky. In 1835 a first book of songs by Koltsov was published, which was universally greeted with great warmth. After that, Koltsov continued living in Voronezh, managing his father's business and coming to Moscow and Petersburg only in connexion with his

father's lawsuits. Koltsov was a man of tact and dignity, and his educated and noble friends highly admired his character. These qualities are always present in his attractive letters, which are also remarkable for the solid common sense displayed in them. He shared the generous aspirations of his idealist friends, though he never quite lost the practical sense and efficiency of the Russian tradesman. But he felt lonely and miserable in Voronezh. His relations with his father, a selfish, despotic, and unimaginative *bourgeois*, went from bad to worse, and gradually his family life became a hell to him. He was saved from it by sudden death in 1842. He had almost ceased to write since 1840.

Koltsov's poetry falls into three distinct sections: his attempts, chiefly belonging to the period before 1835, to write in the accepted literary style of the Pushkin and pre-Pushkin school; his "Russian Songs"; and the philosophical meditations (*dumy*) of his last years. Of these three classes only the second secures for Koltsov a permanent place as a classic. His genteel or "educated" verse is no better than schoolboy's—he never succeeded in mastering the diction and accent of "educated" poetry, chiefly owing to his inability to secure a complete command of the literary language. His meditations, though some profound critics have affected to find them profound, are almost pathetically jejune and helpless. Their philosophy is puerile; their rhymeless metres as threadbare a business as is to be found in a Russian anthology. The "Russian songs" are a very different matter.

Koltsov has been called a Russian Burns. If the title implies anything like equality of genius with the great Scotsman, it is simply nonsense. In *size* of talent Koltsov comes nearer Hogg than Burns. But in *kind* there is no doubt a certain kinship, not altogether superficial. Like Burns Koltsov depended on a literary tradition of quasi-folk-song. Like Burns he was in direct touch with the realities of peasant life, though unlike Burns he was not himself a peasant. Like Burns he had a certain freshness and freedom of outlook his more educated and blue-blooded contemporaries were incapable of. Like

Burns, lastly, he was a realist, and like Burns he had genuine passion. But he is more feminine and sentimental than Burns. Characteristically some of Koltsov's best songs are placed in the mouth of women. His purely lyrical songs are perhaps the best and have become the most popular among the people; there is in them a typically Russian longing for freedom, adventure, and elbow-room. Though they are usually in rhyme and thus more obviously literary in form, they have much more genuine popular feeling in them than the nature and peasant-life songs. One of the best and no doubt the most popular is the marvellous song the first verse of which is thus rendered by Professor Elton:

> Deep the golden time is
> Sunk, that once I tasted;
> Youthful strength and prime is
> With my body wasted.

In these songs, as in real folk-songs, nature appears as a sympathetic symbol-source for the singer's feelings. In the more elaborate nature songs it becomes rather involvedly personified and philosophized. But there is no more beautiful evocation of the wide steppe than *The Mower*, who goes out to sell his strength to the rich Cossacks of the Lower Don. *Prostor* and *privolye*, two untranslatable Russian words meaning, roughly, space and elbow-room, but with an inexpressible poetical overtone, are the keynotes of some of Koltsov's best songs. His love-songs with all their range of slightly sentimentalized and romancified, but genuine and strong, passion are equally exquisite. The beautiful song of the *mal mariée* beginning: "Ah, why did they marry me against my will to an old, unloved person?" (*"Akh zachem menya / siloy vydaliza nemilago / muzha starova"*) is one of the purest gems of Russian emotional lyric poetry. The least genuinely popular part of Koltsov's songs is those where he idealizes peasant life and agricultural labour—a theme entirely alien to actual folk-song. But this does not make them less good. Some of them, such as *A Peasants' Carouse*, are almost Homeric in the simple, unsentimentalized stateliness with which he endows simple life.

3. TYUTCHEV

The literary history of Tyutchev is rather curious. His first verse was published only three years after Pushkin's first appearance in print; most of the poems on which his reputation rests appeared in Pushkin's quarterly in 1836–8, but his poetry had to wait for a first critical appreciation till 1850, when he was "discovered" by Nekrasov and it was suddenly realized that he was a very important poet. This recognition came on the eve of the general decline of all interest in poetry, and only the few preserved his cult till the end of the century, when he was again taken up by Vladimir Soloviev and by the symbolists. To-day he is unquestionably recognized as one of the three greatest Russian poets, and the majority, probably, of poetry readers place Tyutchev, not Lermontov, to the right of Pushkin. Outside Russia, however, though he is much more accessible to the modern romantic taste than is Pushkin, few people have realized his importance. I know from personal experience that when English poetry-readers do discover him they almost invariably prefer him to all other Russian poets. This is only natural, for of all Russian poets Tyutchev abounds in those qualities which the English poetry-reader has learned to value in nineteenth-century poetry.

Fedor Ivanovich Tyútchev was born in 1803 of a family of ancient nobility at his father's country place of Ovstug, near Bryansk. He received a good education at home and at the University of Moscow. His tutor was the poet Raïch who afterwards remained his friend and tried to be his literary sponsor. In 1822, after taking his degree, Tyutchev entered the diplomatic service, and except for several short visits to Russia remained abroad twenty-two years. Most of the time he was in Munich, where he met Heine and Schelling, both of whom corresponded with him. He married a Bavarian noblewoman and came to regard Munich as his home. He wrote much; the infrequency of his appearances in print has been explained by his indifference to his poetic work, but the true reason seems to be his supersensible shyness of editorial or other criticism. But in 1836 a friend who had been admitted

to the privacy of his muse succeeded in persuading him to send a selection of his verses to Pushkin for publication in the *Sovremennik*. From 1836 to 1838 about forty lyrics, all of which (quite literally) are known by heart to-day by everyone who cares for Russian poetry, appeared over the signature of "Th.T." (Theodore Tyutchev). They drew no attention from the critics, and Tyutchev ceased to publish. Meanwhile Tyutchev lost his first wife, and married a second time, again a Bavarian. He was transferred to Turin. He did not like this change, and was home-sick for Munich. While *chargé d'affaires* of the legation, he left Turin and the Sardinian States without permission, and for this breach of discipline was expelled from the diplomatic service. He settled in Munich, but in 1844 came to Russia, and a little later received a post in the Censorship. His political articles and memoranda written in the revolutionary year 1848 attracted official attention. He began to play a politcial *rôle* as a convinced reactionary and an ardent Panslavist. He began also to cut a very prominent figure in the drawing-rooms, and acquired the reputation of the greatest wit and most brilliant conversationalist in Russia. In 1854 his verse at last appeared in book form and he became famous as a poet. About the same time began his liaison with Mlle Denisova, his daughter's governess. Their love was profound and passionate, on both sides, and an infinite source of torture to both. The young woman's reputation was ruined, and Tyutchev's own gravely tainted, as well as his family happiness. When, in 1865, Mlle Denisova died, gloom and despair took possession of Tyutchev. The wonderful tact and forbearance of his wife in the whole affair only increased his suffering by a profound feeling of guilt. But his social and political activities never slackened. His slight, shrivelled figure continued appearing in ball-rooms, his witticisms continued to enchant society, and he developed a more than usual pugnacity in politics—becoming one of the pillars of an unbending nationalist policy. Most of his political verse belongs to the last ten years of his life. He died in 1873, after a stroke that left him in a state of paralysis, with only his brain unimpaired.

From the linguistic point of view Tyutchev is a curious phe-

nomenon. In private and public life he spoke and wrote nothing but French. All his letters, all his political writings, are in that language, as well as all his reported witticisms. Neither his first nor his second wife spoke Russian. He does not seem to have used Russian except for poetical purposes. His few French poems, on the other hand, though interesting, are for the most part trifles and give no hint of the great poet he was in Russian.

Tyutchev's style always remained more archaic than Pushkin's or Zhukovsky's, and except his tutor, Raïch, the only Russian poets who influenced him were the classics of the eighteenth century, Derzhavin and Lomonosov, whose oratorical movement is easily recognizable in many of his poems. His style attained its maturity rather early, and the few poems printed in 1829 already display all its essential features. From about that date Tyutchev's poetry is all of a piece (except for the political poems and the love lyrics of his "last love") and may be considered apart from all chronological limits. The greatest number of his best poems belongs to the decade 1830–40.

Tyutchev's poetry is metaphysical, and based on a pantheistic conception of the universe. As is the case with every metaphysical poet, Tyutchev's philosophy cannot be stripped of its poetic form without loss of meaning. But the main lines of it must be briefly stated. Its chief difference from that of the great English poets is that it is profoundly pessimistic and dualistic—Manichæan in fact. There are two worlds—Chaos and Cosmos. Cosmos is the living organism of Nature, a throbbing and personal being, but it has a secondary and lesser reality as compared to Chaos, the real reality, in which Cosmos is but a slight and precarious spark of ordered beauty. This dualistic philosophy is stated with almost text-book clarity in the following poem:

Day and Night (1839)

Over the mysterious world of spirits,
Over that nameless abyss,
A gold-embroidered veil is thrown

By the high will of the gods.
Day—this dazzling veil—
Day—the enlivening of the sons of Earth,
The healing of the sick soul,
The friend of men and of gods.
But Day darkens, Night comes—
She comes—and tearing from off the fatal world
The blessed fabric of the veil
She casts it aside.
And the abyss is uncovered to our eyes,
With its terrors and mists,
And there is no barrier between it and us—
This is why the night is fearful to us.

This opposition of Cosmos and Chaos symbolized in Day and Night is one of the fundamental themes of Tyutchev's poetry. But Cosmos, the vegetable universe, though leading a precarious existence in the womb of Chaos, is opposed as a higher and greater being to the smallness and weakness of the individual consciousness. This theme finds a rhetorical expression (strongly reminiscent of Derzhavin's famous paraphrase of Psalm lxxxi) in the wonderful poem beginning: "Nature is not what you imagine" ("*Ne to chto mnite vy priroda*," 1836), one of the most grandly eloquent and closely reasoned sermons ever written in verse. It finds another kind of expression in numerous "nature fragments." Most of them are very short, eight or twelve lines. One of the longest is *An Italian Villa* (1838), beautiful in the man-forsaken desolation conquered back by Nature from man—and disturbed by the new intrusion of man:

And we entered; all was so calm,
So peaceful and dark, from the beginning of time.
A fountain murmured; stately and motionless
A neighbouring cypress looked into the window.
Suddenly all came into confusion: a convulsive quiver
Ran through the cypress branches.
The fountain was silent, and some wondrous mutter,
As through sleep, inaudibly whispered.
What was it, friend? or was it not for nothing that evil life,

That life, alas! which we carried with us,
That evil life, with its restless fever,
Had crossed a forbidden threshold?

The two elements of Tyutchev's style, the rhetorical and classical, and the visual romantic are mixed in his poems in varying proportions. In certain cases the romantic style, saturated with bold, visionary imagery, is given almost free play. Such for instance is the marvellous *Dream at Sea* (1836), the most wildly beautiful poem in the language, for richness and purity of romantic vision comparable to Coleridge's best. But even here the precision of the weird and feverish images is reminiscent of Tyutchev's classical training.

In other poems the classical, oratorical, intellectual element predominates as in the one already mentioned (*Nature is not what you imagine*) and perhaps the most famous of all, *Silentium* (1833), which begins:

Be silent, conceal and hide
Both your thoughts and your dreams;

and contains the famous line:

An uttered thought is a lie.

In such poems the romantic vision is recognizable only in the wealth and glow of certain expressions, and in the cunning arrangement of the sounds.

Tyutchev's love poetry written at the time of his liaison with Mlle Denisova has all the unique beauty of his philosophical and nature lyrics, but is more passionate and poignant. It is the most profound, subtle, and moving, tragic love poetry in the language. Its main motive is a racking compassion for the woman whom her overwhelming love for himself has destroyed and ruined. The later lyrics, written after her death, are simpler and more direct than anything he ever wrote before. They are cries of anguish and despair, as simple as poetry can be.

Tyutchev's political and occasional poetry, which forms about half of his collected poems, is far from being equal in

quality to the other half. They do not display the highest qualities of his genius, but some of them are splendid pieces of poetical eloquence, and others exquisite examples of poetical wit. The early poem of *The Taking of Warsaw* is comparable in nobility and complexity of political feeling to Pushkin's *Napoleon*, and the poem *On the New Year, 1855* grandly and uncannily prophetic. Most of his later political poetry (after 1848) is crudely nationalistic and reactionary in sentiment, and much of it (especially after 1863, when he began to write more often than before) is little more than rhymed journalism. But even in this cruder order of ideas he produced such a masterpiece as the lines *On the Arrival of the Austrian Archduke for the Funeral of Nicholas I*, a splendid lyrical invective, one of the most powerful poems ever inspired by indignation.

Tyutchev was famous for his wit, but he made his prose epigrams in French, and he was rarely capable of making his wit collaborate with his art of Russian verse. But he has left several masterpieces in a more serious style of wit, such as the following poem on the Lutheran service (1834):

I like the church-service of the Lutherans,
Their severe, solemn, and simple rite.
Of these bare walls, of this empty nave,
I can understand the sublime teaching.
But don't you see? Ready to leave,
Faith is for the last time with us;
She has not yet crossed the threshold,
But her house is already empty and bare.
She has not yet crossed the threshold;
The door has not yet closed behind her.
But the hour has come, has struck. . . . Pray to God:
It is the last time you will pray.

4. LERMONTOV

The fact that Tyutchev's poetry passed so completely unnoticed in 1836 was only one of the symptoms of a growing general feeling that the day of poetry was done. It was to

have only one more moment of instant and general success in the short, flash-like career of Lermontov. His early death was accepted as the final closure of the age of verse, but the school of poetry had closed before that date. There is an all-important difference between the conditions in which Pushkin and his contemporaries worked and those in which Tyutchev and Lermontov were placed. The latter poets lacked the invigorating environment of a literary movement, and the sympathetic proximity of fellow craftsmen working at the same task. They were alone in a waste land. The fact that Lermontov found an innumerable audience and Tyutchev practically none should not obscure the essential similarity of their situation. Both were cut off from all creative support from the "cultural ambient."

Michael Yurievich Lérmontov was born 3rd October 1814 in Moscow. His father, an army officer and small squire, was the descendant of Captain George Learmont, a Scottish adventurer who in the early seventeenth century entered the Russian service. Learmont, it will be remembered, was the surname of Thomas the Rhymer, and the Learmonts are traditionally descended from him. Lermontov, however, seems to have been ignorant of this poetic ancestry. His mother was an Arseniev, and her mother, née Stolypin, was a wealthy landowner and an important figure in Moscow society. There was a considerable social inequality between the two parents of the poet. When he was three his mother died, and this led to a breach between his father and Mme Arseniev, who appropriated her little grandson and brought him up as a spoilt child. At nine he was taken to the Caucasian waters—where the mountains and the new environment left a lasting impression on him. He was thirteen when he began reading and writing verse, and developed a cult of Byron. He also developed, in a society of numerous, chiefly female, cousins and acquaintances, a morbid self-consciousness and highly sensitive vanity. He began taking himself Byronically, and learnt to magnify his feelings (such as his adolescent loves) and his circumstances (such as his separation from his father) on the grand romantic scale. In 1830 he entered the University, but

studied little and kept aloof from the Idealists who were there at the same time as he. As a penalty for some riotous conduct, he was not allowed to take an intermediate examination, and in 1832 he left the University of Moscow, and went to Petersburg with the intention of matriculating at the university there. But instead of the University he entered the School of Ensigns of the Guards and of Cavalry Cadets. Lermontov did not like either Petersburg or the school. But he soon adapted himself to his new surroundings and became, on the face of it at least, a typical cavalry cadet. His self-consciousness was suppressed and became less apparent. His Byronic pose was transformed into that of a smart and cynical bully. Romantic love, the dominant sentiment of his Moscow days, was suppressed and driven in, and the surface was occupied by easy and venal amours, and after school by callous and calculated Don Juanry. The school brought Lermontov in touch with reality and it was there that his poetry turned from the magniloquent introspections of his earlier youth to frankly coarse, unprintable cadet poems—which, however, are the first germ of his later realism. In 1834 Lermontov was given a commission in the Hussars of the Guard. He was introduced to the best Petersburg society, but his Muscovite connexions were not sufficient to give him a prominent place in it. His vanity suffered from constant pin-pricks, and was only partly soothed by his victories over female hearts. But under this surface Lermontov lived his life of a poet, and gradually attained his maturity. His poetic and romantic nature burst out at the death of Pushkin. In a memorable poem (which may sound to-day like rhetoric rather than poetry, but is in any case rhetoric of the finest quality) he voiced the feelings of the better side of society—despair at the death of the nation's greatest glory, indignation at the alien murderer, who "could not understand whose life he attempted," and scorn and hatred for the base and unworthy courtiers that had allowed the foreigner to kill the poet. The poem hit its mark—and Nicholas reacted accordingly. Lermontov was arrested, tried by court-martial, expelled from the Guards and transferred to a regiment of the line stationed in the Caucasus.

The first disgrace was not of long duration. Before he had been a year in the Caucasus he was pardoned and restored to the Guards. But the short time spent in the Caucasus revived his old romantic attachment for that domestic orient of the Russians, and is abundantly reflected in his work. By the beginning of 1838 he was back in Petersburg, this time a famous poet and a lion.

Though a tale in verse by Lermontov, *Hajji-Abrek*, had appeared in a magazine in 1835, his literary career may be considered to begin with the poem on the death of Pushkin, which (though of course it could not be printed) was widely circulated. In 1837 and 1838 several poems of his appeared in various periodicals, each time attracting considerable attention. In 1839 his friend Krayevsky founded a big magazine, *Otechestvennya Zapiski*, and only then Lermontov's work began to appear regularly and frequently. In 1840 a selection of his poems and the novel *A Hero of Our Times* appeared in book form. But like Pushkin, only with more real grounds and more effectively, Lermontov disliked being regarded as a man of letters. He mixed little with literary circles and Krayevsky was the only man of letters he ever became intimate with. On the other hand he took a keen interest in political questions, and in 1838–40 belonged to a secret debating society—the Sixteen.

Society life, in spite of all the satisfactions it provided for his vanity, galled and goaded Lermontov. He had several real and sincere friends in society, but his general feeling towards it was an indignant and bored contempt. His life at Petersburg was put an abrupt end to. On a most trivial pretext he fought a duel with M. de Barante, the son of the French Ambassador. No blood was spilt, but all the same the poet was arrested, and once again transferred to a line regiment in the Caucasus (1840). This time he took part in several military expeditions against the Chechens and proved himself a brilliantly brave officer. He was mentioned in dispatches and twice recommended for rewards, but these were not approved of in Petersburg. In the summer of 1841 he went to Pyatigorsk, the Caucasian watering-place, where he

found many acquaintances from Petersburg and Moscow, among others his old schoolfellow, Major Martynov. Lermontov and Martynov paid court to the same lady, a Mlle Verzilin, and Lermontov poisoned Martynov's life by teasing his rival in the presence of the lady. Martynov bore it for some time, but at last called Lermontov out. Lermontov was always glad of a duel. They met on 15th July (O.S.) 1841 in the plain near Pyatigorsk. Martynov was the first to fire, and Lermontov was killed on the spot.

During his life Lermontov published very little and only such of his later work as he considered to be mature. But almost immediately after his death began the publication of his early work, strikingly different in quality from that which he himself considered worth publishing. The proportion of this inferior work grew with every new edition, and ultimately resulted in swamping the small quantity of his perfect poetry in an ocean of childish effusions. In dealing with Lermontov it is necessary clearly to distinguish between the immature and the mature, and not to be misled by the (unfortunately, always) *first* volumes of his collected works.

His early poetry is voluminous and formless. To the biographer who is capable of discounting the attitude of the young poet it is valuable, but to the reader of poetry by far the greater part of it is of no use. There occur in it from time to time flashes of genius, bits of song, displaying a hitherto unguessed-of power of direct lyrical cry, and piercing passages of self-expression. There is no mastery in this work, no "finer touch," no command of technique—but the raw material of lyric poetry in abundance. Apart from all the rest of the verse of these years stands *The Angel*, written in 1832, which remains one of Lermontov's highest flights, perhaps the most wonderful *romantic* lyric in the Russian language. It is perfect—though its perfection is not that of maturity. Never has the unconquerable home-sickness of the earth-bound soul for its heavenly fatherland been expressed with purer musical truth than in the sixteen lines of this poem by a boy of seventeen.

The following period (1832–6) was less productive than the

first. The lyrical output especially is insignificant. At school Lermontov wrote little more than the obscene cadet poems. They are the antithesis of his early poetry, and it was in a synthesis of the two elements, realistic and romantic, that Lermontov's true personality was to find its expression. The cadet poems lead on to *Sashka*, where this synthesis is already half achieved. *Sashka* is a genuine and lawful son of Byron's *Don Juan*, perhaps the only one of all his progeny who really looks like his father, though he is certainly both more romantic and less polite. Much of the poem is unprintable and goes back, not to Byron, but to the domestic tradition of coarse verse. All the same the general impression is distinctly romantic. *Sashka* remained unfinished and was published only long after Lermontov's death. The same realistic vein, but without either the romanticism or the obscenity of *Sashka*, is apparent in *The Treasurer's Wife* (published 1838), a comic story of provincial life, in the *Onegin* stanza, and directly derived from Pushkin's *Count Nulin*. Lermontov's first published poem, *Hajji Abrek* (1835), is a Caucasian tale of revenge, free from Byronic darkness and prolixity, written in a rapid *tempo*, with a somewhat crude but vigorous martial beat.

With the single exception of *The Angel* all that constitutes the absolutely valuable part of Lermontov's poetry belongs to the last four or five years of his life. In Lermontov's way of working there was a peculiarity which, as far as I am aware, he shared with nobody: numerous themes and passages of various lengths which appear for the first time in his early verses are taken up again and again, in various settings and with various compositional functions, till at last they find an adequate place in some definitive poem of 1838–40. This migration is characteristic of the general abstract character of Lermontov's poetry. It is not occasional. Reality is an accident. There are permanent visions, permanent knots of emotion, by which he is obsessed; he cannot be at rest until he has freed himself of them. Even in the most deep-felt of his occasional poems, *On the Death of Alexander Odoyevsky* (1839), the central passage is bodily transferred from *Sashka*. And the two largest poems of his mature period—*The Demon* and

Mtsyri—are only fulfilments of conceptions that originated as early as 1829 and 1830.

The Demon, at which he worked in 1829–33, was resumed in 1837 during his stay in Georgia and completed in 1839. The theme is the love of a demon for a mortal. In the early drafts the setting is vague, but in the final form it is Georgia, and the famous descriptive passages of the first part belong to the last period of its creation. The poem could not appear in the reign of Nicholas, as the censorship considered its subject anti-religious, but it was circulated in innumerable copies. In the second half of the nineteenth century it was probably the most universally popular single poem in Russia. It attracted the poetry-reader by the same quality as had attracted him in Pushkin's southern poems—its exquisite mellifluousness. Lermontov's mellifluousness is more purely musical than Pushkin's. It is not tempered by the precise classical training of the elder poet. Our time has greatly reduced its estimate of *The Demon*. The content of the poem is on a level with the Angel-and-Peri poems of Moore. The Demon himself is the least convincing devil ever conceived by a poet. He is merely operatic, and the fact that *The Demon* became the libretto of the most operatic of Russian operas (by Anton Rubinstein) is significant. For most Russian poetry-readers *The Demon* is a serious drawback in the general appreciation of Lermontov. But there is in it, after all, a wonderful verbal music, and a haunting magic which had the power of conquering such a man as the great visionary painter Vrubel and inspiring him to his most memorable imaginings. It is still a source of inspiration to great poets, like Blok and Pasternak, who are able to find more in it than the fastidious uncreative poetry-reader can. For behind its obvious puerility and apparent tinsel there is what can hardly be described otherwise than the real presence of demons.

Mtsyri (which is a Georgian word meaning a novice) has a somewhat similar history. Its theme is the confession at the hour of death of a rebellious young man to his spiritual father —a defiance of the rule and a declaration of unbroken spirit. It is closely related in metre (it is in English octosyllabics; i. e.

with single rhymes) and in diction to Zhukovsky's *Prisoner of Chillon.* Its first draft—*The Confession* (1830)—like the first draft of *The Demon,* is only vaguely localized. Its second draft—*The Boyar Orsha* (1835)—has an operatic, "Old Russia" setting, and a complicated but incoherent plot. In the final version, as in that of *The Demon,* the scene is laid in Georgia. *Mtsyri* is a poem of great power, and may be regarded as the most sustained piece of poetic rhetoric (in the best and highest sense of the word) in Russian. But it is more than that. All that part of the poem which is about nature belongs to the central, small, but priceless, visionary core of Lermontov—the only Russian poet who knew the "distant land" of the English and German romanticists.

This vision of a "distant land" of eternity shimmering through the visions of this world had already found a definitive expression in *The Angel.* It is the positive side of Lermontov's romanticism. Its negative side is his passionate contempt for the human herd. Indignation against "empty society" is a dominant note in much of the poetry of his last years. Such poems as *The Death of Pushkin, The Poet,* the bitter *Meditation* on his contemporaries ("Sadly do I look at our generation"), or the invective against the French nation on the occasion of the burial of Napoleon at the Invalides (*The Last Housewarming*) are splendidly effective eloquence, and poetry in so far as they are eloquence in verse. But there is one poem in which *both* the romantic aspects of Lermontov, the visionary and the rhetorical, are blended in one supreme and matchless unity. That is *New Year's Night:* surrounded by the gay, aristocratic crowd at a ball in town, the poet remembers the pure, transcendent visions of his early years—"the creation of my dream, with eyes full of an azure fire, with a rosy smile like the first brilliancy of the young dawn behind the grove"—and, brought back to reality, ends in a cry of indignant scorn at the mob round him.

But Lermontov was not only a romanticist. The older he grew the more he realized that reality was not merely an ugly veil thrown over eternity, not merely a thraldom of his heaven-born spirit, but a world to live in and to act in. The realistic

element makes its first appearance in the cadet poems and in *Sashka.* It continues asserting itself in the work of his maturity, when, parallel to the ridding himself of his romantic obsessions, he gradually developed a new manner, in which he proved himself a greater *master* than in his romantic poetry. For the romantic poems are either a splendid display of effective, rather than refined, rhetoric, which is saved from being bombast and prose merely by the force of the poetic breath that fills it, or gusts of heavenly music overheard from the spheres rather than consciously created. In his realistic poetry Lermontov is a genuine master, a disciple of Pushkin. By sheer intuition he was able to guess many of the secrets of the poet, from whom he was severed not so much by years as by a breach of tradition. For Lermontov grew up in a world already unfamiliar with French and classical culture, and never had the benefit of knowing men who might have taught him. His style was at first strikingly unlike Pushkin's. It was as vague as Pushkin's was precise, as swollen as Pushkin's was terse—it seemed not to consist of individual words with distinct meanings, but of verbal masses molten into indistinguishable concrete. It was precisely his vagueness, so compatible with music and "heavenly song," that allowed him to achieve his highest romantic effects, but outside these purple patches his poetry, in his romantic poems, is merely the rush of verbal torrents. In his realistic poems he worked at making himself a new style that would bear no traces either of a heaven-born origin or of romantic untidiness. Beginning with the Russian poems of 1837—the stirring and simple war-ballad of *Borodino,* written in the language and expressing the ideas of an old veteran, and the wonderful *Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov,* a narrative of Old Russia in a metre and a style taken with admirable intuition from the epic folk-songs (though the subject and spirit are frankly romantic)—he achieved style and measure, creating these masterpieces without the elusive aid of heavenly tunes and purple patches. He now became able to treat a romantic theme (like that of *The Fugitive,* 1841) with a concise clarity worthy of Pushkin and with a martial go that was his alone. In a few poems of his last two years he

attempted a purely realistic poetry, in the language and diction of prose, but on the big themes and with the high seriousness of great poetry. Together with *The Angel* and its kin, the poems of this group are his greatest achievement in verse. They bear out his claim to stand in the national esteem by the side of Pushkin. The most remarkable are *The Testament* of a dying officer of the Caucasian Army (admirably translated by Maurice Baring in his *Outline of Russian Literature*), and *Valerik*, a "letter in verse" describing a battle against the mountaineers, in a style of simple, but pregnant, realism. It is a link between *The Bronze Horseman* and the military scenes of *War and Peace*.

What Lermontov might have grown into as a poet is a matter of wide speculation. Even as it is, he is one of the small number of great poets, and, though to-day his star is under an eclipse, it is probable that posterity will once again confirm the judgment of the nineteenth century and place him immediately next to Pushkin. As a romantic poet he has (with the conceivable exception of Blok) no rival in Russia, and he had in him everything to become also a great realist (in the Russian sense). But it is highly probable also that the main line of his further development would have been in prose, which is regarded to-day as his least questionable title to a first rank.

5. THE POETRY OF REFLECTION

The poetry of the Golden Age had been above all and first of all "poietic"—in the etymological sense of the word *poietes* (maker). The poets of that age were "makers." Their poetry was not a transcript of their experience, but a creation out of the material of experience. The poetry of Lermontov was (like all real poetry) also a creation and a transformation, but the element of raw experience and the will to express it play a much larger part in it than in that of his elders. In his later work he certainly turned towards a more "poietic" method of working. But to the reader poetry ceased to be the making of "things of beauty," whose very beauty resided in the

fact that they were new and transcended this experience, and became a direct response to his actual—psychological—emotions, "a beautiful language of emotion"—in short, the beautiful statement of feelings he had actually experienced. When once poetry reaches this stage, it ceases to have an independent existence.

Feeling—inner experience—formed the chief interest in life of the better class of Russians in the thirties and forties. Hamlet was their hero and introspection their principal occupation. The cult of feeling, with the conviction that great feelings are a man's only claim to superiority, was shared by all. But almost invariably introspection failed to detect in the introspected subject feelings of sufficient greatness. Dissatisfaction with one's own self at not finding there the great, ennobling feelings of romantic tradition is the common theme of the literature of the time. It is very evident in Lermontov. One of his short lyrics is so characteristic of the age that I will quote it in a prose translation, for though the beauty of the verse be lost, the transcript of experience is sufficiently interesting to warrant a translation.

I feel bored, and sad. And there is no one to give me a hand in a moment of the soul's sickness. Desires? What use to desire ever and in vain? And my years pass, all the best years. Love? But whom? for a short time it is not worth the bother, and to love eternally is impossible. If I look inside myself, there is not a trace of the past there, and joy and sorrow are equally insignificant. Passions? what are they? will not their sweet sickness, sooner or later, disappear before the word of Reason? And life, when one looks round with cold attention, is such an empty and silly joke!

In Lermontov of course this kind of feeling and this kind of writing was only one side of his weaker—human, not "poietic" —self. But in the minor poets of his generation, the so-called poets of reflection (which in Russian means critical introspection), a similar feeling is practically the only note, while their style is merely a versified transcript of such feelings. The most characteristic of these poets were Ivan Pavlovich Klyúshnikov (1811–1895) and, especially, Nikolay Platonovich Ogarév

(1813–1879), the friend from childhood and for many years the political ally of Herzen. A man of great, but undisciplined, nobility of soul, Ogarev was unhappy in his family life. He emigrated in 1856 and was co-editor with Herzen of the *Bell.* He was to a great extent Herzen's evil angel, not on account of any evilness of his intentions, but because he was entirely devoid of that genius of political tact which was so prominent in his great associate. His poetry (which he began publishing in 1840 and which first appeared in book form in 1856) is typical of the idealistic forties. Melancholy, disillusionment, impotent longing, wistful recollections of missed happiness, are his principal themes. The poetry of Ogarev is the poetry that might have been expected from a hero of Turgenev's novels.

Turgenev himself began his career by writing verse. His poetic activity lasted from 1838 to 1845. He is far more artistic than Klyushnikov and Ogarev, for through the intermediation of Pletnev he had a direct contact with the Golden Age. But the theme of his poetry is the same as theirs—melancholy, disillusionment, idealistic irony on the falling off and fading of "great feelings." His most memorable (and longest) poem is *Parasha,* which was enthusiastically greeted in 1843 by Belinsky. It is a poem of idealistic irony—the subject is the degeneration of the ideal love of youth into the humdrum realities of middle age. The style is a descendant of that of *Don Juan,* of *Evgeni Onegin,* and of Lermontov (whose prosody is admirably aped). Without being a great poem, or comparable to the best of Turgenev's stories, it is not by any means a contemptible production.

6. THE DRAMA

The Russian theatre in the thirties and forties continued to be adorned by great actors and a high level of acting, but not by great playwrights. The one exception emphasizes the rule—the comedies of Gogol are as isolated and alone in the thirties as the comedy of Griboyedov was in the twenties. The common run of play writing was by no means superior to that

of the preceding period. In tragedy romanticism had triumphed, but its triumph was no benefit to the Russian stage. The plays of Nestor Kúkolnik (1809–1868), in blank verse, on romantic themes and cast in a mould borrowed from Schiller, held the stage with tremendous success, especially in Petersburg, where a public of government clerks found just what it required of romanticism in the cheap and showy, unmistakably meretricious, tinsel of Kukolnik. Less obviously meretricious, but in other respects no better than Kukolnik's, were the romantic and patriotic plays of the unfortunate Polevoy. Nor can anything better be said of Baron George Rosen (1800–1866), the author of the libretto for Glinka's great opera *Life for the Tsar* (1836), though for some reasons that entirely escape us he was, at one time, patronized by Pushkin.

The real tragic poet of the thirties was neither Kukolnik nor Polevoy—but Shakspere. This is true especially of Moscow, where the audiences were more intellectual and more democratic than in Petersburg, and consisted of students of the University and of young merchants and city clerks, avid of culture and beauty. *Hamlet* especially was the play of the moment. The idealists found in Hamlet a fellow spirit, while the rest of the audience were carried away by the romantic beauty of the dialogue, and still more by the inspired acting of Paul Mochalov (1800–1848), Russia's great romantic tragedian.

But while part of the Russian stage was dominated by romanticism incarnate in the person of Mochalov, another part of it was steadily progressing towards a new, and Russian, conception of realism. The growth of realism on the Russian stage is much more regular and logical than in literature, owing to the great personality of Michael Shchepkin (1787–1863), who in the second quarter of the century revolutionized comic acting, and laid the foundations of the purely Russian realistic style.

The comic repertory, especially in Petersburg, was almost entirely dominated by the vaudeville. Though the later vaudevillists chose Russian subjects for their plays and invented Russian plots, the *genre* was eminently unoriginal and French.

It was full of a gay and light-hearted *Scribisme*, and its literary significance is small. But from the theatrical point of view it was an exceedingly grateful kind of play, for it was full of action and gave ample opportunity to the actors to individualize their parts. It has been said that from the point of view of stage-craft the vaudevillists of the thirties and forties have never been surpassed in Russian dramatic literature. But their literary significance is almost nil.

7. THE NOVELISTS OF THE THIRTIES

The imaginative prose of the thirties and early forties was a chaos, but a fertile chaos. Romanticism and realism, fantasy and everyday life, idealism and satire, construction and style, are all in a state of fertile fermentation, all mixed and jumbled together. The chaos was to take a form only in the second half of the forties, when the Russian realistic school was born.

The main tendencies of the fiction of the period may be classified under three heads—French romanticism, German romanticism, and Russian naturalism. The first is represented by Weltmann and Prince Vladimir Odoyevsky; the second by Nicholas Pavlov and Elena Hahn; the third by Pogodin and Dahl. In Gogol the three tendencies are all present, but he transcends them all by the sheer greatness of his originality.

Alexey Fomich Weltmann (1800–1869) began his literary career in 1830, and continued it till his death, though after the decline of romanticism in the forties he practically lost his audience. His style is based on Sterne, Jean-Paul and the German romanticists. A blend of imagination and playfully irresponsible humour is the groundwork of his stories. They are loosely constructed, and abound in Sternian devices of destroying the narrative illusion. They are full of scholarship, which is treated in the true Sternian way, with humorous intent. The idealists of the thirties and early forties appreciated Weltmann's romantic humour and his whimsical methods of construction as the expression of "romantic irony"—the irony of the superior poet for the imperfection of the finite

world. He is never tiresome, for even in his worst absurdities and irrelevancies the unfailing charm of his humour and of his whimsical style makes him delightfully readable.

Prince Vladimir Fedorovich Odóyevsky (1803–1869) was in his youth one of the Wisdom-lovers. His later life was passed in the Civil Service, where he did much excellent work; he died a Senator (i. e. a member of the Supreme Court of Justice). He was also a philanthropist and his name is connected with several notable charities. He was a man of encyclopædic knowledge, well versed in physical science (including alchemy), in music, and in philosophy. In literature he was, together with Weltmann, the principal channel of German romanticism. All his best stories are strongly marked by the influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann. The contrast between the inferior and dubious reality of common life and the higher reality of ideal life is the main subject. All his stories are inspired by a contempt for the low and fleshly life of the Philistine herd. His most ambitious work is *The Russian Nights* (1844), a series of philosophical conversations on the subject of the inadequacy of philosophical science when unguided by the higher knowledge to solve the riddles of the universe.

The "French" romanticists cultivated ideas of a simpler and more immediately practical kind—liberty and the cult of passion —and the more forcible forms of rhetoric. The most successful of them was Nicholas Pavlov (1805–1864), the disreputable husband of Caroline Pavlova. His *Three Tales* (1835), carelessly passed by the Censorship, were one of the greatest literary sensations of the period. They are full of lively and high-sounding rhetoric. But their principal interest lay in a note of strong social protest, a note that had never sounded so strongly in Russian fiction. The most striking of the three tales was the tragic story of a musician of talent who was a serf. Pavlov did not fulfil the promise of his first book. His second book (*New Tales*, 1839) was inferior to it, and after that he entirely devoted himself to gambling and dinner speeches.

The influence, shortly to become so powerful, of George Sand made its first appearance in the work of Elena Hahn, née

Fadeyev (1814–1843), who wrote under the name of "Zinaida R-va." She belonged to a remarkably gifted family: her brother, the military writer Rostislav Fadeyev, will be noticed in a later chapter; one of her sisters became the mother of Count Witte, and another of Mme Blavatsky. Her husband was an artillery officer, and she spent her life wandering from one God-forsaken billet to another. All her stories are a protest against the sickening boredom, vulgarity, and emptiness of provincial and garrison life. Her heroines are sweet and silent, but ideal and strong—alive with strong and sincere passions. They are pathetically naïve and helpless, and invariably the victims of the envy and slander of provincial gossip. The male characters are either cads who seduce women by a pretence of love, or cowards whose passions are too weak to make them act honourably with the women who love them.

The third group, that of the Russian naturalists, belongs chiefly to the post-Gogolian period and cannot be considered before we have spoken of Gogol. But the first realistic stories of Russian middle-class life, by Pogodin, appeared as early as 1829, and Dahl began his literary career by anecdotes and folk-tales in a consciously popular style in 1832.

Apart from the main line of development and parallel to, rather than in any way dependent on, Gogol are the novels of Ukrainian life of Gregory Kvitka (1779–1843), who wrote under the name of Osnovyanenko. Most of his work is in Ukrainian and falls outside the scope of the present volume, but his novel *Pan Khalyavsky*, a heavily realistic and heavily humorous picture of the uninspired and purely materialistic life of the Ukrainian squires, is a notable landmark in the evolution towards pure physiological naturalism.

8. GOGOL

Nikolay Vasilievich Gógol (his full family name was Gogol-Yanovsky, but he early dropped the second half) was born on 19th March 1809 in the market town of Sorochintsy, in the Province of Poltava. He came of a family of Ukrainian Cossack gentry. His father was a small squire and an amateur

Ukrainian playwright. In 1821 Gogol went to a provincial grammar-school (the lyceum of Nezhin) and remained there till 1828. It was there he began writing. He was not very popular among his schoolfellows, but with two or three of them he formed lasting friendships. Very early he developed a dark and secretive disposition, mingled of painful self-consciousness and boundless ambition. Equally early he developed an extraordinary mimic talent, which later on made him such a matchless reader of his own works. In 1828, on leaving school, Gogol came to Petersburg, full of vague but glowingly ambitious hopes. They were at once cruelly frustrated. He had hoped to become an actor, but he was rejected, his voice being found too weak. He had hoped to make a brilliant career in the Civil Service—but was set to work at copying trivial and meaningless papers. He had hoped for literary fame, and brought with him a poem, very weak and puerile, of German idyllic life—*Hanz* (*sic*) *Küchelgarten*. He had it published, at his own expense of course, and under the name of "V. Alov." It was met by the magazines with deserved derision. He bought up all the copies and destroyed them. In this state of disillusionment he suddenly went off abroad, with the intention, as he said, of going to America. But he went only as far as Lübeck. After a few days' stay there he returned to Petersburg, and once more tried his fortune, this time with better patience. He entered the Civil Service, still hoping to become a great administrator, and he began writing prose stories. He came in touch with the "literary aristocracy," had a story published in Delvig's *Northern Flowers*, was taken up by Zhukovsky and Pletnev, and, in 1831, introduced to Pushkin. He was well received in this most select of literary sets and with his usual vanity became enormously proud of his success and very self-confident. Thanks to Pletnev's good offices, he was appointed teacher of history at a Young Ladies' Institute, and at once began to imagine that the way he was to become great was by writing history. In the mean time (1831) he brought out the first volume of his Ukrainian stories (*Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*), which met with immediate success. It was followed in 1832 by a second volume and in 1835 by

two volumes of stories entitled *Mirgorod* (containing *Viy, Taras Bulba, Old-World Landowners, and Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich*), as well as by two volumes of miscellaneous prose, entitled *Arabesques* (containing, besides a variety of essays, *The Nevsky Prospect, The Memoirs of a Madman,* and the first draft of *The Portrait*). In 1834 Gogol was made Professor of History of the University of St. Petersburg, though, except an unlimited self-confidence, he had absolutely no qualifications for the chair. This academic venture proved a signal failure. His first lecture, an introduction to mediæval history, was a brilliant piece of showy rhetoric, but those that followed it were poor and empty. Turgenev, who happened to be one of Gogol's audience, has left a record of the painful impression they produced. Gogol soon realized his failure (though he does not seem to have acknowledged his inadequacy) and resigned his chair in 1835. His good relations with the "literary aristocracy" continued and Pushkin and Zhukovsky continued encouraging him. But there was never any real intimacy between either Pushkin or Zhukovsky and Gogol. They liked him and appreciated his talent, and refused to idolize him. It is probable, after all, that they undervalued him. But, while the "aristocracy" gave him qualified admiration, in Moscow Gogol met with the adulation and entire recognition sufficient to satisfy him. The young idealists, with Belinsky at their head, carried him to the skies, but it was not with them he made friends. The set that became his principal sanctuary were the Slavophils, especially the Aksakov family, in which he could taste of absolute and unconditioned admiration.

Though between 1832 and 1836 Gogol worked at his imaginative creations with great energy, and though almost all his work has in one way or another its sources in these four years of contact with Pushkin, he had not yet decided that his ambitions were to be fulfilled by success in literature. It was only after the presentation, on 19th April 1836, of his comedy *Revizor* that he finally believed in his literary vocation. The comedy, a violent satire of Russian provincial bureaucracy, saw the stage only owing to the personal interference of Nicholas I. It was met by enthusiastic praise and virulent obloquy.

The Petersburg journalists, the spokesmen of the official classes, raised the hue and cry against Gogol, whilst the "aristocrats," and the Moscow idealists of every shade of opinion were equally emphatic in admiring it. They received it as more than a work of art, as a great moral and social event. Though hurt by the attacks of the Philistines, Gogol was in much greater degree elated by the praise of his admirers. When, two months after the first night, he left Petersburg for abroad, he was finally convinced that his vocation was to "be useful" to his country by the power of his imaginative genius. Henceforward for twelve years (1836–48) he lived abroad, coming to Russia for short periods only. He chose Rome for his head-quarters. He became enamoured with the Eternal City, which answered to his highly developed sense of the magnificent, and where even the visions that always obsessed him of vulgar and animal humanity assumed picturesque and poetical appearances that filled harmoniously into the beautiful whole. The death of Pushkin produced a strong impression on Gogol especially by emphasizing his conviction that *he* was now the head of Russian literature, and that great things were expected of him. His principal work during these years was the great satirical epic (*poema*, as its Russian sub-heading goes) *Dead Souls*. At the same time he worked at other tasks—recast *Taras Bulba* and *The Portrait*, completed his second comedy, *Marriage*, wrote the fragment *Rome* and the famous tale *The Greatcoat*. In 1841 the first part of *Dead Souls* was ready, and Gogol took it to Russia to supervise its printing. It appeared in Moscow in 1842, under the title, imposed by the Censorship, of *The Adventures of Chichikov, or Dead Souls*. Simultaneously a collected edition of his earlier work was brought out in four volumes. The reception of the new book by all those who counted was undoubtedly enthusiastic. This was the summit of Gogol's literary career and, practically, the end of his work as an imaginative writer. The subsequent developments were unexpected and disappointing and still form one of the strangest and most disconcerting passages in the history of the Russian mind.

Gogol's imaginative creation, especially his most ambitious

and influential works, *Revizor* and *Dead Souls*, was satirical. It seemed satire pure and simple levelled at the dark and animal forces of stagnant Russia. It was accepted as such both by the interested side, the bureaucrats and their journalistic mouthpieces, and by the dissatisfied *élite*. To the latter the author of these satires appeared as a teacher, a man with a great message of moral and social regeneration, an enemy of dark social forces, and a friend of progress and enlightenment. There was in this attitude a great misunderstanding. Gogol's work was satirical, but not in the ordinary sense. It was not objective, but subjective, satire. His characters were not realistic caricatures of the world without, but introspective caricatures of the fauna of his own mind. They were exteriorizations of his own "ugliness" and "vices": *Revizor* and *Dead Souls* were satires of self, and of Russia and mankind only in so far as Russia and mankind reflected that self. On the other hand, while endowed with a superhuman power of creative imagination (in which in the world's literature he has had equals, but certainly no superior), his understanding was strikingly inadequate to his genius. His ideas were those of his provincial home, of his simple, childish mother, only modified by an equally primitive romantic cult of beauty and of art, imbibed during the first years of his literary career. But his limitless ambition, stimulated by the homage paid him by his Moscow friends, urged him to become more than a mere comic writer, to be a prophet and a teacher. He worked himself into a faith in his divine mission which was morally to regenerate sin-bound Russia.

After the publication of the First Part of *Dead Souls* Gogol, it would seem, intended to continue it on the plan of Dante's Comedy. The first part, which contained none but caricatures, was to be the Inferno. The second part was to be the gradual purification and transformation of the rogue Chichikov under the influence of virtuous publicans and governors—Purgatory. Gogol began working at the second part immediately, but it proceeded haltingly and was put aside. Instead he decided to write a book of direct moral preaching that would reveal his message to the world. But he had no message to

reveal, apart from the weird masque exteriorized by his subconscious self, or the glowing heroic and romantic images of his creative imagination. The "message" that was embodied in the new book was nothing but a hotchpotch of provincial, very earthly and uninspired, religious flatness, sprinkled by a little æsthetic romanticism and served up to justify the existing order of things (including serfdom, corporal punishment, etc.) and to impress on every man the duty of *conforming* conscientiously and to the best of his might with the present God-ordained order of things. The book, entitled *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends* (though it contained practically no passages from actual letters), appeared in 1847. Gogol expected it to be received with awe and gratitude, like a message from Sinai. He actually believed that it would be a signal for the immediate regeneration of Russians from sin. He was cruelly disappointed before long. His best friends, the Slavophils, were painfully and unmistakably disgusted. Aksakov, the very archpriest of the Gogol cult, wrote to him a letter of bitterly wounded friendship, accusing him of Satanic pride masquerading in the guise of humility. After this and similar rebukes from people whom he regarded as his own, the violent, vehement, and outspoken letter of Belinsky, which accused him of falsifying Christianity for the profit of those in power and of adoring reaction and barbarity, though it hurt Gogol deeply, contributed little to increase his self-disillusionment. His inferiority complex rose in a wave of self-disgust, and Gogol threw himself on the mercy of religion. But he was not made for a religious life, and however despairingly he forced himself to it, he could not succeed. His tragedy entered on a new stage. Instead of trying to proclaim a message he had not got, he now tried to acquire an experience he was incapable of. His early education made him view Christianity in its simplest form: as the fear of death and hell. But he had no inner impulse towards Christ. His despair of himself was enhanced by the pilgrimage he undertook (in 1848) to the Holy Land. His incapacity to warm himself up to genuine religious experience in the presence of the Lord's footsteps, increased his conviction that he was

irrevocably lost and damned. From Palestine he returned to Russia and passed his last years in restless movement from one part of the country to another. He met Father Matthew Konstantinovsky, a fierce and narrow ascetic, who seems to have had a great influence on him and strengthened in him his fear of perdition by insisting on the sinfulness of all his imaginative work. However, Gogol continued working at the second part of *Dead Souls*, a first draft of which he had destroyed in 1846 as unsatisfactory. His health, long unsatisfactory, gradually gave way. He undermined it by exaggerated ascetic practices, all the time trying to compel himself to a Christian inner life. By February 1852 he was practically in a state of distraction. In an access of self-mortification he destroyed some of his manuscripts, which contained most of the second part of *Dead Souls*. He explained this as a mistake—a practical joke played on him by the Devil. It is not clear whether he really meant to do it or not. After that he fell into a state of black melancholy, and died on the 21st February 1852.

The significance of Gogol is twofold—he is not only a great imaginative writer; he is a supremely interesting individuality, a psychological phenomenon of exceptional curiosity. This psychological side still remains and will probably always remain very largely a mystery. I am not here concerned with it, except in so far as it is directly connected with the nature of his creative work. But as a writer Gogol is not twofold in the sense Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky is. There is no common *literary* measure between his imaginative work and his miscellaneous and moralistic writings. The latter are remarkable only in so far as they throw light on the psychological, human personality of Gogol. The early essays contained in *Arabesques* are rhetoric pure and simple, of a kind that is but the manure for the really magnificent rhetoric of such early stories as *The Terrible Vengeance* or *Taras Bulba*. The *Correspondence with Friends* is painful, almost humiliating, reading, in spite of the occasional flashes of imagination which break through its heavy and poisonous mist. The critical pages, with their sometimes genuinely and sublimely imaginative appreciations and impressionistic portraits of Russian poets (especially of his

favourites Yazykov and Derzhavin), may be alone singled out for praise. Of the writings of his last years the commentary on the liturgy is derivative and irresponsible. While *The Author's Confession* is notable as a human document of considerable importance, it has no claim to comparison with the *Confession* of Tolstoy. Still, even in these writings, the unique, unrepeatable personality of Gogol is always present in the laboured, consciously original style, with its constant suggestion of the presence of unconquered chaos and disorder.

His imaginative work is a very different business. It is one of the most marvellous, unexpected, in the strictest sense original, worlds ever created by an artist of words. If mere creative force is to be the standard of valuation, Gogol is the greatest of Russian writers. In this respect he need hardly fear comparison with Shakspere, and can boldly stand by the side of Rabelais. Neither Pushkin nor Tolstoy possessed anything like that volcano of imaginative creativeness. The enormous potency of his imagination stands as a strange contrast (or complement) to his physical sterility. He seems sexually never to have emerged from an infantile (or, rather, early adolescent) stage. Woman was to him a terrible, fascinating, but unapproachable obsession, and he is known never to have loved. This makes the women of his imagination either strange, inhuman visions of form and colour that are redeemed from melodramatic banality only by the elemental force of the rhetoric they are enshrined in, or entirely unsexed, even dehumanized, caricatures.

The main and most persistent characteristic of Gogol's style is its verbal expressiveness. He wrote with a view not so much to the acoustic effect on the ears of the listener, as to the sensuous effect on the vocal apparatus of the reciter. This makes his prose intense and saturated. It is composed of two elements, romantically contrasted and romantically extreme—high-pitched, poetic rhetoric, and grotesque farce. Gogol never wrote simply—he is always either elaborately rhythmical or quite as elaborately mimetic. It is not only in his dialogue that the intonations of spoken speech are reproduced. His

prose is never empty. It is all alive with the vibration of actual speech. This makes it hopelessly untranslatable—more untranslatable than any other Russian prose.

The other main characteristic of Gogol's genius is the extraordinary intensity and vividness of his *sight*. He saw the outer world in a way that is incommensurable with our ordinary vision. He saw it romantically transformed, and even when he saw the same details as we do, they acquired such proportions in his vision as to become entirely different in meaning and measure. Gogol's pictures of nature are either romantically phantastic transformations (like the famous description of the Dniepr in *The Terrible Vengeance*) or strange mounds of detail heaped on detail, resulting in an unconnected chaos of things. Where he is absolutely supreme and definitive is in his vision of the human figure. His people are caricatures, drawn with the method of the caricaturist—which is to exaggerate salient features and to reduce them to geometrical pattern. But these caricatures have a convincingness, a truthfulness, an inevitability—attained as a rule by slight but definitive strokes of unexpected reality—that seems to beggar the visible world itself.

I have alluded to the great and exceptional originality of Gogol. This does not mean that numerous influences cannot be discerned in his work. The principal of these are: the tradition of the Ukrainian folk and puppet theatre, with which the plays of Gogol's father were closely linked; the heroic poetry of the Ukrainian Dumas, or Cossack ballads; the *Iliad* in the Russian version of Gnedich; the numerous and mixed traditions of comic writing from Molière to the vaudevillists of the twenties; and the novel of manners from Le Sage to Narezhny; Sterne, chiefly through the medium of German romanticism; the German romanticists themselves, especially Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffmann; the "furious school" of French romanticism, with, at its head, Hugo and Jules Janin, and their common master, Maturin—a long and yet incomplete list. Many of the elements of Gogol's art may be traced back to these sources. And they are not merely borrowings and reminis-

cences of motives, most of them had a profound effect on his very manner and technique. Yet they are only constituent details in a whole of more than expectable originality.

Gogol's genius progressed very little. With the exception of the insignificant and inessential *Hanz Küchelgarten*, only six of the eight stories in *Evenings on a Farm* may be bracketed apart as distinctly early and young. The remaining two stories of that collection and all the ensuing work up to and including the first part of *Dead Souls* may be regarded as, in a sense, a homogeneous rock of the mature Gogol. After that came only the extant fragments of the second part of the epic—where Gogol, forsaken by the sure guidance of genius, endeavoured to evolve a new manner.

The first part of *Evenings* (containing *Sorochinsky Fair*, *St. John's Eve*, *The May Night, or The Drowned Girl*, and *The Lost Charter*) together with two of the four stories of the second part (*Christmas Night* and *The Charmed Spot*) are the early Gogol. They are much simpler, less sophisticated and tense, than anything he wrote later. Their fun, which was what attracted the reader above all, is simple and unadulterated. Their romance is somewhat youthfully operatic, but free from sophistication. Their devilry is gay and lighthearted. The picture they give of Ukraine is of course quite fantastic, but it was so attractive, at once so prettily romantic and so hugely funny, that not even the Ukrainians themselves (except till much later) remarked all the absurdities, all the supreme disregard for (and ignorance of) reality displayed by Gogol. The prefaces to each of the two volumes, placed in the mouth of the suppositious narrator, the beekeeper, Red Panko, are already masterpieces of Gogol's mimetic art. The stories themselves depend for the humorous parts on the stock characters of the Ukrainian puppet theatre; for the spook and romance on the various fictions of chiefly German romanticists. Gogol is present in the blend of the two elements, in the verbal intensity of the style, in the vivid convincingness of the largely fantastical dialogue of the comic figures, in the unique, physical infectiousness of the laughter.

Of the remaining two stories in the second part of *Evenings*,

The Terrible Vengeance is a creation of the purest romantic imagination. Strongly redolent of foreign romanticism and full of reminiscences of the Cossack songs, *The Terrible Vengeance* is, in a certain sense, a masterpiece. It is Gogol's greatest effort at purely ornate prose. The beautiful rhythmical movement is sustained without breach or flaw from beginning to end. The story is gruesome and creepy, and at a first reading almost intolerably impressive. It is one of his very few stories where humour is entirely absent.

Of the stories contained in the *Mirgorod* volumes the romantic element is present in *Taras Bulba* and in *Viy*. The former is an historical romance of Cossack Ukraine. Though suggested by, it is very unlike, the romances of Scott. It is supremely free from considerations of historical exactitude, and nevertheless full of the spirit of the old Cossack warriors and of echoes of their poetry. It is almost as full, in the battle scenes, of reminiscences of the *Iliad*. Its place in Russian literature is unique—it has had no imitators or followers (except, perhaps, our contemporary Babel in his stories of the Red Army). It is heroic, frankly and openly heroic, but it is also (and the two elements are inextricably intertwined) broadly humorous and realistic. It is perhaps the only Russian imaginative work that has that many-sided exuberance that might claim the epithet Shaksperian. *Viy* is also a wonderful blend of romantic weirdness with realistic and homely humour. The construction of the story, the absence from it of questionable rhetoric, and, especially, the perfect fusion of the two discordant elements of terror and humour, make *Viy* one of the fullest and richest of Gogol's stories.

Gogol's stories of everyday life of contemporary Russia are introspective—not in the sense that he analysed and described his psychic experience as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, or Proust did, but because his characters are exteriorized and objectivated symbols of his experience. His inferiority complex and his deep roots in the animal, or rather vegetable, life of a rural squiredom gave these symbols the form of caricatures of grotesque vulgarity. The aspect under which he sees reality is expressed by the untranslatable Russian word *poshlost*, which is

perhaps best rendered as "self-satisfied inferiority," moral and spiritual. But other subjective aspects may be discovered in his realistic stories—in particular what we might call a "sterility complex," which makes its appearance in the very first of these stories, in *Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Aunt*, the fourth story of the second volume of *Evenings*.

Gogol was no realist, and yet a realist. He did not see reality as it was. In fact, till after the publication of the first part of *Dead Souls* he took scant interest in reality as such, and relied for the creation of his characters entirely on his unaided imagination. But he was a realist in the sense that he introduced (as details and as material) innumerable elements and aspects of reality that had hitherto not possessed the freedom of literature. He was (like Tolstoy, Gorky, and Andreyev, after him) a great lifter of taboos, a great destroyer of prohibitions. He made vulgarity reign where only the sublime and the beautiful had reigned. This was *historically* the most important aspect of his work. Nor was the general attitude to him of the younger generation as a social satirist entirely unjustified. He did not paint (and scarcely knew) the social evils of Russia. But the caricatures he drew were, weirdly and terribly, *like* the reality about him; and the sheer vividness and convincingness of his paintings simply eclipsed the paler truth, and irrevocably held the fascinated eye of the reader.

In his attitude towards "vegetable life" Gogol oscillated between sympathetic complacency and scornful irony. The sentimental and sympathetic attitude is most fully expressed in the *Old-World Landowners* (in *Mirgorod*), where the vegetable humours of the old pair, their sloth, their gluttony, their selfishness, are idealized and sentimentalized; and pathetic sympathy is the main emotion evoked in the reader. The purely ironic attitude is expressed with equal purity in the other realistic story of *Mirgorod—The Story of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich*. It is one of the greatest of Gogol's masterpieces. His comic gift (always verging on impossible caricature and impossible farce) appears in its absolute purity. But like almost all his later stories it

results ultimately in a vision of depressingly hopeless gloom. The story, begun as a merry farce, grows towards the end uncannily symbolical, and ends with the famous words: "It is gloomy in this world, gentlemen" ("*Skuchno na etom svete, gospoda*").

Of the five short stories whose scene is set in Petersburg, *The Portrait* is purely romantic, devoid of humour, and curiously reminiscent of Poe. *The Memoirs of a Madman* (1835) and *Nevsky Prospect* (the Broadway of Petersburg, 1835) are romantic in the Hoffmannesque sense, for their subject is the juxtaposition of dream life and real life. *Nevsky Prospect* is one of Gogol's masterpieces—Pushkin described it as "the fullest" of his stories. *The Nose* (1836) is a "fantasia" on a theme that was popular in the magazine literature of his time (a man loses his nose), and seems to be connected with his complexes. It is a piece of sheer play, almost sheer nonsense. In it more than anywhere else Gogol displays his extraordinary magic power of making great comic art out of nothing.

The last in time of the Petersburg stories is *The Greatcoat* (first published in 1842), which together with *Revizor* and *Dead Souls* turned out to be Gogol's most influential work. It is the story of the poor clerk, Akaki Akakievich Bashmachkin (a name suggestive in Russia of farcical associations, which are made full use of in the beginning of the story), who lives on four hundred roubles ($200) a year and whose only dream in life is to make himself a new greatcoat. When at last he has the money and the greatcoat is ready, the first time he goes out he is waylaid by thieves and robbed of the greatcoat. Akaki Akakievich is represented as a pathetically humble and inferior figure, and the story passes through all the gamut of attitudes towards him, from sheer fun to poignant pity. It is this poignancy of pity for the poor and insignificant man that impressed so strongly the contempory reader. *The Greatcoat* gave rise to a whole literature of philanthropic stories about the poor clerk, of which the most significant is Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk*.

It is impossible to enter here on a detailed account of *Dead Souls*. The story is familiar even to many English readers.

The plot turns on Chichikov's roguish plan of buying up "dead souls" (that is, serfs who had died since the last census and for whom their owners continued to pay the poll-tax) for nothing and then getting money by pawning them. The construction is loose, and the narrative spacious. The verbal and visual wealth of the style is as intense as in *The Greatcoat*. The characters are, together with those of *Revizor*, the most memorable and permanent of Gogol's legacy to the Russian mind. Chichikov is the greatest of Gogol's subjective caricatures—he is the incarnation of *poshlost*. His psychological *leit-motif* is complacency, and his geometrical expression roundness. He is the golden mean. The other characters, the squires Chichikov visits on his shady business, are typical "humours" (for Gogol's method of comic character-drawing with its exaggerations and geometrical simplification is strongly reminiscent of Ben Jonson's). Sobakevich, the strong, silent, economical man, square and bearlike; Manilov, the silly sentimentalist with pursed lips; Mme Korobochka, the stupid widow; Nozdrev, the cheat and bully, with the manners of a hearty good fellow, are types of eternal solidity. Plyushkin, the miser, stands apart, for in him Gogol sounds a note of tragedy—he is the man ruined by his "humour"; he transcends *poshlost*, for in the depth of his degradation he is not complacent, but miserable; he has a tragic greatness. Among other things the first part of *Dead Souls* contains "The Story of Captain Kopeykin," where Gogol transcended himself in the wealth of verbal expressiveness.

The second part of the great epic, to judge by what has been left us of it, was a distinct decline. In it Gogol tried to overcome the natural tendencies of his style, and to become more objective and realistic. He succeeded only in forfeiting his strength. It contains first-class work in the style of the first part (especially the "humour" of the glutton, Petukh), but the new manner was a complete failure. The objectively drawn, good-and-bad-mixed characters are comparatively lifeless, and the ideal characters of the good publican and the virtuous governor quite unconvincing and hollow. It does not

seem that Gogol would have been able to transcend what he considered his limitations.

Gogol's mimetic gift predestined him to dramatic achievement. His greatness as a dramatist rests chiefly on the *Revizor*, which is doubtless the greatest play in the Russian language. It is not only supreme in the character drawing and in the dialogue—it is one of the few Russian plays that is a play, constructed with unerring art from beginning to end. The great originality of its plan, as seen against the background of contemporary and classical dramatic literature, consisted in the absence of all love interest and the absence of sympathetic characters. The latter feature was deeply resented by the enemies of Gogol, and as a satire the play gained immensely from it. *Revizor* was intended as a *moral* satire, against bad officials, not a social satire against the *system* of corruption and irresponsible despotism. But quite apart from the author's intention it was received as a social satire, and in the great oppositional movement against the despotism of Nicholas I and the system of bureaucratic irresponsibility its influence was greater than that of any other single literary work. In their great symbolic and comprehensive popularity the characters of *Revizor* stand by the side of those of *Dead Souls*. They are less obviously geometrical and, the characterization depending entirely on the dialogue, more supple and human. They are less markedly "humorous," more ordinary, more average, than Sobakevich and his like. The head of the local administration, the *Gorodnichy*, is a satirical figure of immense symbolism and pregnancy. As for the central character, Khlestakov, the supposed inspector-general himself, he is as subjective and introspective as Chichikov. If in Chichikov Gogol exteriorized all the vegetable elements of his self, in Khlestakov he symbolized the irresponsibility, the light-mindedness, the absence of measure, that was such a salient trait of his own personality. But, like Chichikov, Khlestakov is entirely "transposed," entirely alive—the most alive of all the characters of Russian fiction—meaningless movement and meaningless fermentation incarnate, on a foundation of placidly

ambitious inferiority. As for the dialogue of *Revizor*, it is above admiration. There is not a wrong word or intonation from beginning to end, and the comic tensity is of a quality that even in Gogol was not always at his beck and call.

Of Gogol's other plays *The Vladimir Order*, which was planned in 1833 as a satire of the Petersburg bureaucracy, remained unfinished, it would seem, for the reason that Gogol despaired of seeing it through the Censorship. *Marriage*, begun in 1832 and completed in 1842, is very different from *Revizor*. It is neither satirical nor constructed. It is loosely built, the dialogue greatly dominating over the action. It is pure fun, though undoubtedly on a Freudian foundation (the same "sterility complex" as in *Shponka*). The characters and the dialogue are marvellous. For here, unfettered by any message, Gogol gave free reign to his grotesque, mimetic imagination and surpassed himself in the exuberance of his comic creation. The remaining play, *The Gamblers*, is inferior to the two great comedies. It is an unpleasant play, inhabited by scoundrels that are not funny, and, though the construction is neat, it is dry and lacks the richness of the true Gogol.

On the stage, as in fiction, Gogol's action, historically, was in the direction of realism. Here as elsewhere he was an opener of doors, an introducer of hitherto forbidden material. *Marriage* especially, with its broad and original treatment of merchant manners, had an appreciable influence on Ostrovsky. And it was in these two comedies (and in *Gore ot Uma*) that Shchepkin achieved the greatest triumphs of his realistic acting.

9. LERMONTOV'S PROSE

Lermontov began writing prose very early. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen he wrote three plays in prose which are on the same low level as his early verse. They are in a rhetorical style descended from Schiller's *Robbers*, and deal in high-strung passions and melodramatic situations. The most notable thing in them is several strong and realistic scenes describing the abuse of despotic power by the serf-owners. In

1835 Lermontov returned once more to the dramatic form and wrote *The Masquerade*, a melodrama in the measure of *Gore ot Uma*. Though the forcible, rhetorical verse in which the play is written is much superior to the prose of the early plays, it has no other merits and is, like them, a swollen melodrama with unreal personages.

Lermontov's first attempt at fiction also belongs to his pre-cavalry days. It is a romance, left unfinished, of the Pugachev Rebellion, with a dark Byronic revenger for hero, and in the style of the French "furious school," its shrill rhetoric relieved at times by scenes of brutal realism. His second attempt was a novel of Petersburg society, *Princess Ligovsky*, at which he worked in 1835–6 in collaboration with his friend Svyatoslav Rayevsky, and which was likewise left unfinished. It possesses already many of the qualities of Lermontov's great novel *A Hero of Our Times*, and its principal character is a first draft of Pechorin.

In 1837–9 Lermontov's creative evolution was in two directions—on the one hand he was working off, ridding himself of, the subjective obsessions of his early years; on the other he was evolving a new, impersonal, objective, and realistic manner. Thus it was that the same Caucasian impressions of 1839 found their way both into *The Demon* and *Mtsyri* and into their opposite, *A Hero of Our Times*.

A Hero of Our Times, a novel in five short stories, appeared in 1840. It had an immediate success, and a second edition (preceded by a remarkable preface, in which Lermontov made fun of his readers for believing that in his hero, Pechorin, he had portrayed himself) appeared before his death, in 1841. The novel is one of those works in the valuation of which Russians and foreigners differ most. Russian critical opinion is unanimous in assigning an exceedingly high place to *A Hero of Our Times* and almost unanimous in considering it of greater importance than Lermontov's poetical work. Abroad it has failed to kindle enthusiasm, for reasons similar to those which have kept Western people from appreciating Pushkin at his true worth: Lermontov is too European, too human, insufficiently "Russian," to please the spice-craving palates of

Latin and Anglo-Saxon Russopaths. On the other hand the perfection, negative rather than positive, of his style and narrative manner can only be appreciated by those who really know Russian, who feel the fine imponderable shades of words and know what has been left out as well as what has been put in. Lermontov's prose is the best Russian prose ever written, if we judge by the standards of perfection and not by those of wealth. It is transparent, for it is absolutely adequate to the content, and neither overlaps it nor is overlapped by it. It is different from Pushkin's in its complete freedom, and in the absence of that constraint which is always present in the greater poet's prose.

The novel consists of five stories. The first (*Bela*) relates the narrator's meeting on the road from Tiflis to Vladikavkaz with the Caucasian veteran Captain Maxim Maximych. Maxim Maximych tells the story of Pechorin, who was his subaltern for a time in a fort on the mountain frontier, and of Pechorin's love-affair with a Caucasian girl. In the second, the narrator meets Pechorin himself and comes by his journal. The remaining three stories are extracts from the journal of Pechorin. The first, *Taman*, relating an incident he had with some smugglers in the town of that name, is perhaps the masterpiece of Russian fiction. Such at least it was considered by Chekhov, who owed much of his method to the atmospheric construction of that story. Next comes *Princess Mary*, the longest of the component stories, which itself may be regarded as a complete short novel. It is the diary of Pechorin, describing his stay at the Caucasian waters. It is analytic, and a large part of Pechorin's entries are a direct dissection of his mind, in an aphoristic style closely connected with that of the French moralists, and which is first cousin to Stendhal's. The construction of the story is delicately suggestive of a parody of *Evgeni Onegin*. The last of the component stories is *The Fatalist*, in which Pechorin is nothing but a narrator and plays no part. It is an intensified anecdote, akin to the tales of Pushkin.

Pechorin, the hero, is a strong, silent man, with a poetic soul, who from noble shyness and high contempt for the herd,

especially for the aristocratic herd, assumes the mask of a snob and a bully. He is capable of noble and generous passions, but life has robbed him of all opportunity to experience them, and his devastated heart is like an extinct volcano. Pechorin was not only a great literary, he became an important social, influence—he was imitated in life as well as in fiction. To us Pechorin is redeemed from operatic cheapness by the magical atmosphere of the novel which lifts him above the possibility of ridicule or second-rateness. It is an atmosphere difficult to define. It has a particular fine, refined quality, at once ironic, tragic, and visionary. Goethe would have called it "daimonic." The vision behind the novel is never so much as hinted at, but it is unmistakably present, and gives it that air of nobility which (in spite of its complete freedom from the vice of poeticality) raises it above the level of mere prose fiction. This fine and rarefied atmosphere, together with the perfection of the verbal and narrative form, is what has induced people by no means extravagant or paradoxical to call *A Hero of Our Times* the greatest Russian novel, thus placing it above *War and Peace.*

Another notable feature of the novel, and one which had the greatest effect on the immediate future, is the figure of Maxim Maximych, the veteran captain of the line, the simple, humble, and casual hero of duty, kindness, and common sense, who is one of the greatest creations of Russian realism. It is a connecting link between Pushkin's Captain Mironov and Tolstoy's humble heroes of army officers, and in this line it is, unquestionably, the fullest and most comprehensive expression of the type.

After *A Hero of Our Times* Lermontov wrote little prose, nor had he much time to write more. It includes *Ashik-Kerib,* a Tartar tale which shows how genuine and sympathetic was Lermontov's understanding of the East; and the beginning of a novel of Petersburg, which is full of a cold and condensed romanticism that has its roots in *The Queen of Spades* and makes us lament all the more the untimely death of one who, had he lived, might have shown the Russian novel a manlier and stronger way than it actually took.

10. THE FIRST NATURALISTS

Under the influence of Gogol's taboo-lifting and boundary-removing work there arose towards 1840 what called itself the "Natural School." The movement ultimately culminated in the birth of the national school of realism in the memorable years 1846–7. Before that date its pioneers, apart from Gogol, were Dahl, Sollohub, and Butkov.

Vladimir Ivanovich Dahl (1801–1872) was of foreign (Danish) origin. His name is to-day remembered chiefly for the remarkable philological work of his later years—*A Reasoned Dictionary of the Living Great-Russian Language* (four volumes, 1864–8), which still forms the basis of our knowledge of Russian as it was spoken by the people before the spread of standard schoolmastery. In literature Dahl was inspired by the desire to free Russia from the Greco-Latin-German-French fetters imposed on it by the old bookmen, by Lomonosov and Karamzin. But in spite of an enormous knowledge (purely practical and empiric) of the spoken tongue he had no real sense of style, and his efforts to Russianize literary Russian were ineffective. His stories and anecdotes, written (in the thirties and forties) in illustration of his linguistic aspirations, are not remarkable. His stories of contemporary life in the "natural style" were historically more important. He was the first to introduce the form of the "physiological sketch"; that is, of short, descriptive stories illustrating the peculiarities of this or that particular social milieu, a form that had a great vogue in the forties.

Count Vladimir Alexandrovich Sollohub (1814–1882) was an aristocratic dilettante. In the forties, before the appearance of Goncharov and Dostoyevsky, he was regarded as the greatest promise of the "natural school." His best-known work, *Tarantas* (1844), is a satirical journey from Moscow to Kazan in a tumble-down travelling-cart (*tarantas*). The satire, superficial and uninspired, is directed against the ideas of the Slavophils and the unpractical dreaminess of the romantic idealists.

There is a greater intensity and seriousness in the work of

Yakov Butkov (*c.* 1815–1856), whose *The Summits* (i. e. attics) *of Petersburg* (1845–6) is the most important landmark of philanthropic literature between Gogol's *Greatcoat* and Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk*. Himself a penniless proletarian and the sweated drudge of the publisher Krayevsky, Butkov's stories are devoted to the sentimental and humorous evocation of the life of the poor government-clerks of the capital.

11. THE PETERSBURG JOURNALISTS

Russian journalism flourished and its importance increased in the course of the present period. In spite of the Censorship, whose rigour was never for a moment abated during the whole reign of Nicholas I, it was precisely now that the Russian magazines finally became the leaders of public opinion and acquired the peculiar form and colouring they retained till the great Revolution. Petersburg journalism was at first dominated by the notorious triumvirate—Bulharyn, Grech, and Senkowski—of whom the most talented was Joseph-Julian Senkowski (1800–1858). An Arabic scholar of considerable achievement * and, like Bulharyn, a Pole by birth, from 1834 he edited the *Library for Reading* and wrote in it under the pseudonym of Baron Brambeus. Fundamentally cynical, he had no respect for genius, sincerity or generous emotion. His smart and witty reviews and critical surveys poured out contempt and obloquy on all the best authors of the time. His style, flippant, facile, tasteless, and cheaply humorous, had an immense influence on the formation of Russian journalese. Senkowski and Belinsky, so unlike in their spiritual content, were equally operative in putting an end to the elegant and distinguished "French" prose of the Karamzin-Pushkin tradition.

12. THE MOSCOW "CIRCLES"

The contrast, in the thirties, between bureaucratic, cynical, pleasure-seeking, meretricious Petersburg and young, idealistic,

* He was also the translator into Russian of Morier's *Hajji Baba*.

inspired, philosophical Moscow was striking. While the papers of the Petersburg triumvirate, servile and subservient, flourished, brought in big incomes, and were never so much as frowned at by the authorities, the history of the Moscow magazines is a succession of martyrdoms at the hands of the Censorship, and of financial failures in the hands of dilettante publishers. The history of Muscovite idealism is much less connected with its journals than with the famous "circles" (*kruzhok*, plural *kruzhki*).

These "circles" were invariably connnected with the University. In the twenties the Wisdom-lovers had been already a typical "circle" of the kind. They were one of the germs out of which in the thirties grew up the Slavophil group. In the early thirties the University of Moscow contained among its undergraduates a remarkable group of young men who formed the two famous "circles" of Stankevich and of Herzen. The former devoted themselves to the enthusiastic study of German idealistic philosophy—Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel. Herzen's circle concentrated on political and social questions, and were the first to introduce the doctrines of the idealistic socialism of Saint-Simon and Fourier.

The University of Moscow was a crucible wherein all classes were melted into a non-class intelligentsia. The *raznochintsy* * were an increasingly important element in the mixture, and though Stankevich and others were great landowners, the principal leader of the westernizers was Belinsky, a plebeian, with a strong plebeian pride.

In spite of this growing plebeian element the Moscow "circles" retained a semi-aristocratic character, and maintained a close connexion with the intellectual part of Moscow society. The debates on philosophical, historical, and literary subjects that were such a prominent and famous feature of intellectual Moscow in the later thirties and forties took place at the *salons* of the Elagins, of the Sverbeyevs, at the Khomyakovs', at Chaadayev's, at Caroline Pavlova's. It was in these *salons*

* *Raznochintsy* (singular *raznochinets*) means literally "men of various classes." They included all those who, having received an education, had ceased to be members of the lower classes, but not become nobles.

that a new Russian culture was forged, and one very different from that of Lomonosov, Karamzin, and Pushkin. Though many of the great intellectuals of the thirties and forties, partly owing to the rigours of the censorship, partly owing to a deeply embedded aristocratic dilettantism, have left few traces in literature, it has become the tradition to include at least a mention of the principal leaders of intellectual Moscow in every history of literature.

The oldest of them was Peter Yakovlevich Chaadayev (1793–1856). In his early years he had been a Hussar of the Guards, a Liberal, and a friend of Pushkin's. In the twenties he underwent a conversion to mystical Christianity, with a strong leaning to Rome. About 1830 he wrote, at the request of a friend, his *Philosophical Letters* (in French) on the meaning of history. They contained a ruthless criticism of Russian history from the point of view of Roman Catholicism. They were not originally intended for publication. But ultimately Chaadayev was prevailed upon to have them printed in Nadezhdin's *Telescope*. The first letter appeared in 1836. It passed the censorship, but when it was out it produced the effect of a bomb-shell. The *Telescope* was suppressed and Chaadayev officially declared a lunatic and placed under medical supervision. After this incident Chaadayev continued living in Moscow, surrounded by a halo of martyrdom and courage in the eyes of the young westernizers, who in spite of his Romanism looked up to him as a leader and a patriarch. His striking figure, with his high and bald forehead, was a principal ornament of the intellectual *salons*, where to the last he waged his war of words with the nationalists. His writings, though so exiguous in extent, give him an important place in the history of Russian thought, for, whatever we think of his conclusions, he stated some of the most essential problems of Russian history and Russian civilization with unique historical grasp and ruthless courage.

The most remarkable of Moscow journalists was Michael Petrovich Pogódin (1800–1875). The son of a serf and of a self-made man, he was at the University of Moscow with the future Wisdom-lovers and became their friend. He was

afterwards made Professor of Russian History and in his untiring researches accumulated an exceptionally valuable collection of Old Russian documents. Being by birth more businesslike than his aristocratic friends, he became their publisher and the editor of their magazines, the most important of which was the *Moskvityanin* (1841–56).

Pogodin is far more interesting as a character than as a writer. He is in fact one of the most curious and comprehensive characters of modern Russian history, a strange blend of the most contrasting characteristics: morbidly close, and disinterested in his love of Old Russia; highly cultured, and essentially retaining the mentality of a provincial merchant; naturally a coward, and yet capable of such real civic courage as the remarkable memoranda which he addressed during the Crimean War to Nicholas I, with an outspoken criticism of his whole reign. All people who knew him were more or less disgusted by him; and yet there was in him a power and a message that made that great and erratic genius Apollon Grigoriev look up to him as his only master and guide.

Pogodin's literary biography is full of interest. For fifty years he was the centre of literary Moscow, and his biography (in twenty-four volumes!) by N. P. Barsukov is practically a history of Russian literary life from 1825 to 1875. But his literary work need not detain us long. As an historian he was a great antiquarian and *Quellenforscher*, but had no constructive genius. As a publicist he was severely handicapped by an absence of sincerity and courage (except in the remarkable war memoranda). Nor does his early imaginative work, historical plays and realistic tales, give him a high place as a writer, though in the tales he was one of the first swallows of national realism. He wrote a vigorous, unsweetened, often crude Russian, which has more character than elegance.

Pogodin's associate, Stepan Petrovich Shevyrév (1806–1864), Professor of Literature at the University of Moscow, was one of the most cultured and European men of his generation and a critic of great merit. His essays on Pushkin (*Moskvityanin*, 1841) have recently been restored to their law-

ful position as one of the most illuminating criticisms of the great poet.

13. THE SLAVOPHILS

Slavophilism was an emotional attitude before it became a doctrine. Slavophilism in the strict sense was a creation of Khomyakov and the Kireyevskys in the thirties, but Slavophil feelings had long been alive in many Russian minds. I have spoken already of the naïve nationalism of Admiral Shishkov. S. T. Aksakov was a living link between these older forms and the developed creed of the thirties and forties. The latter included liberal and semi-anarchistic elements, and may be perhaps best defined as conservative anarchism. The primacy of the moral and religious law, of ancestral tradition, and of the spontaneous sense of the right and just over the written laws and regulations of the State, and the primacy of the whole unreflecting reason over the lower logical and dissecting reason were the principal tenets of the Slavophils. This they found in Old Russia and in the Orthodox Church, but not in western Europe and in the Roman Church, where logical reason and formal law had from time immemorial got the upper hand of whole reason. They regarded Russia as the vessel of salvation for humanity, not because she was Russia, but because she had received within and preserved the pure tradition of Orthodox Christianity, and because in her early history she had developed higher and more Christian principles of society than had the West. Peter the Great had violently torn Russia away from her true tradition and injected the baleful influence of the West. The Petersburg monarchy was not truly national. It had abjured the national ideals and gone to the school of the godless absolutism of the West. It had enslaved and humiliated the Church, which only in its secret heart had preserved its true light, and was on the surface Europeanized and secularized.

The greatest of the Slavophils was Alexey Stepanovich Khomyakóv (1804–1860). After graduating from Moscow

University (at eighteen) he served in the Horse Guards and took part in the Turkish War of 1828–9. His later life was uneventful. He married the sister of the poet Yazykov, a woman universally admired for her high moral character, and was (like almost all the Slavophils) exceptionally happy in his family life. He passed his time in looking after his estates, writing his treatises, and disputing with the westernizers in the Moscow *salons*. He was very versatile, very widely informed, and all he did he did well. He was as efficient a landlord as he was brilliant a debater. In spite of his dislike for the formal logical reason of the West he was the greatest dialectician of his generation, and the most formidable opponent in a close debate. To literary history Khomyakov belongs as a poet, a philosopher of history, and a theologian.

He began writing verse in the twenties. His early poetry is coldly brilliant and full of conceits. Afterwards he abandoned this early manner and made his verse the mouthpiece of his political and religious feelings. He is not a great poet, but in what is perhaps poetic eloquence rather than poetry he has few rivals in Russia. His religious poems, especially that wonderful poem *The Labourer* (1858), are (with the possible exception of some of Theodore Glinka's) the best in the language for the profound sincerity of the (un-mystical) feeling and the noble simplicity of the expression. His political verse is on Slavophil themes. The best of it, however, is inspired by indignation at Russia's unworthiness of her great historical and religious mission. The poems written during the Crimean War have a particularly high place in the anthology of Russian political verse.

Khomyakov's great work was to be a treatise on the philosophy of history. It remained unfinished. It is the least lasting of his works. Full of extensive, but dilettantesque erudition, it is little more than a curious monument of constructive imagination.

He is far more important as a theologian. His teaching is contained in a series of works, the chief of which are the "Essay on the Idea of the Church," and his correspondence with the English High-Churchman William Palmer. Khomy-

akov's central idea was the idea of liberty, of the spontaneous, unforced love of man for God, and of the spontaneous acceptance of the law of God, not as law, but as freedom. In theory Khomyakov was equally opposed to Romanism and Protestantism, but the edge of his criticism is much more often directed against the former. Like all the Slavophils he greatly preferred the Protestant to the Catholic nations of Europe. He had a particular liking for England and the Anglicans. But the England he liked was only the traditional England of the Tories, not the progressive England of the Whigs. He recognized in the former, in its neglect of written law, in its fidelity to custom and to unwritten understanding, his favourite ideals of conservative anarchism.

Khomyakov's theology did not receive the sanction of the official Church and his theological works were even not allowed to be published till 1879. But all Orthodox thinking in Russia has ever since followed his lead, and to-day he is practically (though not explicitly) regarded as a Doctor of the Church.

As a writer of prose Khomyakov is remarkable for the clearness, fullness, and beautiful ease of his Russian, which is free both from the Gallicisms of the Karamzin-Pushkin school and from the untidiness and vulgarity of later nineteenth-century journalism. In non-narrative prose Khomyakov has a place similar to Aksakov's in narrative prose.

Next to Khomyakov the two most remarkable older Slavophils were the two brothers Kiréyevsky, Ivan (1806–1856) and Peter (1808–1856). Their mother, re-married to a Mr. Elagin, was the hostess of one of the most famous intellectual *salons* in Moscow. Both Ivan and Peter were men of great culture and high moral character. Peter hardly belongs to the history of literature, for his few articles are not particularly important. But he was, as it were, a keeper of the sacred fire of the Slavophil religion. His cult of Russia and of the Russian people was an exclusive, fanatic, devouring passion which left him no room for other feelings. He spent much of his life wandering over Russia collecting the songs of the people. He thus accumulated a vast collection, which remained for the greater part unpublished.

Ivan was more literary than Peter, but his literary career was mis-shapen and thwarted. His criticisms published in the late twenties marked him out as the best critic hitherto born in Russia. In 1832 he started editing a big literary review, the *European*, which was almost immediately suppressed. After this venture he ceased writing for many years. Partly under the influence of his brother Peter and of Khomyakov, from a follower of Schelling he became a Slavophil and an Orthodox churchman. In 1845 he took over the editorship of Pogodin's *Moskvityanin*, but failed to get on with him and retired before the end of the year. In 1852 he once more published an article in a purely Slavophil miscellany, for which the miscellany was suppressed.

Kireyevsky was the master of a beautiful style, which, unlike Khomyakov's, is closely akin to Karamzin's and Pushkin's. He was the first Russian intellectual layman to resume the long-lost contact with the profoundest and most alive mystical currents inside the Orthodox Church, and in this respect he is, together with Khomyakov, the fountain-head of all modern Orthodox culture.

14. BELINSKY

The movement of the westernizers took form about 1840, when the philosophical idealists of the circle of Stankevich and the socialist idealists of the circle of Herzen became united in one movement, equally opposed to official Russia and to Slavophilism. I shall have so much to say in the course of these chapters of the individual westernizers that it would be superfluous to begin with a general description of the movement. What they stood for may be summed up as faith in progress on European lines. They were anti-clerical, and in politics liberal or socialist.

Of the two circles of the thirties the principal leaders were Timothy Granóvsky (1813–1855), from 1839 Professor of History at the University of Moscow, a brilliant lecturer and an elegant writer, but not an original scholar; Herzen, whose

work belongs mainly to a later period; and, most important of all, Belinsky.

Vissarion Grigorievich Belínsky was born in 1810, the son of a poor army doctor. Like most intellectuals of plebeian birth he retained no grateful memories of his boyhood and school-days in the little out-of-the-way town of Chembar (Province of Penza). In 1829 he entered the University of Moscow and there soon became intimate with Stankevich and other young idealists. After three years at the University he was sent down and never took a degree. His education was acquired, much more than by regular study, by omnivorous reading and personal contact with fellow students. Of all foreign languages he knew only French, and that imperfectly. German and English books he could read only in translations. For his philosophical information (the great thing in the Moscow circles of the time) he always depended on his better-educated friends. On leaving the University Belinsky engaged in journalism and soon joined Nadezhdin's *Telescope*. There in 1834 he published his first important article—the famous *Literary Musings*, which may be regarded as the beginning of Russian intelligentsia journalism. In it and in his subsequent articles published in Nadezhdin's magazine Belinsky displayed from the outset that eminently pugnacious and enthusiastic temperament which earned him the nickname of the "furious Vissarion." His articles were inspired with a youthful irreverence for all that was old and respected in Russian letters, and an equally youthful enthusiasm for the new ideas of idealism and for the creative forces of the young generation. He rapidly became the bogy of the conservative and the leader of the young.

In 1836 the *Telescope* was suppressed, and Belinsky left without a regular job. At first he engaged in tutorial work and wrote a Russian grammar. Then for some time he was editor of *Moskovsky Nablyudatel*, which his friend and (then) philosophical authority Bakunin had acquired from Pogodin. Neither Bakunin nor Belinsky was businesslike and the venture was a failure. At last, in 1839, Belinsky was invited by

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Krayevsky to be principal critic of *Otechestvennya Zapiski*. He went to Petersburg and settled there. Though grossly underpaid and sweated by Krayevsky, he was at least saved from all danger of absolute destitution.

During his work with Nadezhdin Belinsky had been inspired by the romantic idealism of Schelling, with its high idea of poetic and artistic creation. Afterwards he was led away by Bakunin towards the moral idealism of Fichte, and thence to Hegel. He came to Petersburg full of that philosopher. His first articles in Krayevsky's review caused considerable consternation among his readers by their unexpectedly enthusiastic conservatism and "official nationalism." The public were not aware of the hidden logic of the critic's philosophical evolution, and that he was now living up to Hegel's famous proposition: "All that is is rational." The proposition led Belinsky (who did not like stopping half-way) to the conclusion that the existing social and political régime was rational. This "conservative Hegelism," however, was only a transient stage in Belinsky and by 1841 his ideas assumed their final form, historically the most important. This last change was partly due to the influence of the way Hegel's thesis was interpreted by the "Left Hegelians," partly to that of Herzen and his socialism, but above all it was a natural reaction of the "furious" critic's temperament, which was that of a fighter and a revolutionary. Henceforward Belinsky became the moving spirit of the progressive westernizers, and the herald of the new literature, that was to be neither classical nor romantic, but modern. That literature should be true to life and, at the same time, inspired by socially significant ideas became his principal demand, and Gogol and George Sand its fullest incarnations. In 1846–7 Belinsky had the gratification of seeing the birth of a school of realistic literature that precisely answered to the ideals he had heralded.

In 1846 Nekrasov and Panayev, men of Belinsky's party and partly of his making, purchased from Pletnev Pushkin's *Sovremennik*, and Belinsky forsook Krayevsky (who was only a business man and no real friend) and became the critic of the *Sovremennik*. In 1847 owing to his failing health he went

abroad and there, once free from the censorship and from the inquisitiveness of the Russian post, wrote his famous letter to Gogol on the occasion of the latter's *Correspondence with Friends*. The letter is full of passionate and wounded indignation at the "lost leader" (in speaking of Gogol I have shown that this was largely a misunderstanding, as Gogol had never really been a leader) and perhaps the most characteristic statement of the faith that animated the progressive intelligentsia from 1840 to 1905. Soon after his return to Russia Belinsky died (May 1848). He had remained unmolested by the police and suffered comparatively little from the Censorship, for he had learnt the art of adapting his words to its exigencies. But had he lived a little longer there is small doubt that, terrorized as the Government was by the events of 1848, he would have in one way or another become a martyr, and perhaps shared the fate of Dostoyevsky.

Belinsky's historical importance can scarcely be exaggerated. Socially he marks the end of the rule of the gentry and the advent of the non-class intelligentsia of *raznochintsy* to cultural leadership. He was the first in a dynasty of journalists who exercised an unlimited influence on Russian progressive opinion. He was the true father of the intelligentsia, the embodiment of what remained its spirit for more than two generations—of social idealism, of the passion for improving the world, of disrespect for all traditions, and of highly strung, disinterested enthusiasm. He became a sort of patron saint of the Russian radicals, and till recent times his name, alone of all names, was above criticism. Of recent times, especially owing to the change of literary standards and the eclipse of the civic attitude to literature, his reputation has greatly suffered.*

There is much to be said both for and against Belinsky. It remains to his lasting credit that he was the most genuine, the most thoroughgoing, the most consistent of literary revolutionaries. He was inspired by a love of the immediate future, which he foresaw with wonderful intuition. Never perhaps was

* Victor Shklovsky, one of the most influential critics of to-day, voiced a widespread feeling when he wrote: "I detest Belinsky and all the other (fortunately, unsuccessful) murderers of Russian literature."

a critic so genuinely in sympathy with the true trend of his times. And, what is more, he discerned almost unerringly what was genuine and what meretricious, what significant and what second-rate among his contemporaries. His judgments on writers who began their work between 1830 and 1848 may be accepted almost without qualification. This is high praise for a critic, and one that few deserve. In his judgments of the literature of the preceding age and generation he was handicapped by party feeling, or rather by certain too definite standards of taste which to our best understanding were wrong. He understood only a certain kind of literary excellence (it happened to be practically the only kind practised by men of his generation), and was blind to other kinds. He judged the writers of the eighteenth century and of the Golden Age from the point of view of his own idealistic realism. The selection he made of them imposed itself on Russian literary opinion for two-thirds of a century. We have emancipated ourselves from it. But from his point of view it was admirably judicious and consistent. His judgments of foreign literature were on the whole much less happy, which is hardly astonishing considering his linguistic limitations. All said and done, he cannot be denied the name of an exceptionally sensitive and prophetic critic.

His faults, however, are also serious. First of all comes his style, which is responsible for the dreadful diffuseness and untidiness (as Senkowski's is for the disgusting vulgarity) of Russian journalese (I mean high journalese) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly no writer of anything like Belinsky's importance ever wrote such an execrable lingo.

Secondly the message of Belinsky as a critic is hardly capable of kindling any enthusiasm to-day. Not that the civic note he introduced in the forties was avoidable or harmful. It was necessary and it was in tune with the times. The civic attitude to literature in the later years of Nicholas I's reign was shared by all who were of any value, and was merely an expression of civic conscience. It is his *literary* doctrine that is difficult not to quarrel with. He was not entirely responsible for it, but he was more than anyone effective in so widely

propagating it. It was Belinsky, more than anyone else, who poisoned Russian literature by the itch for expressing ideas, which has survived so woefully long, and still survives among men of the older generation. It was he also who was instrumental in spreading all the commonplaces of romantic criticism —inspiration, sincerity, genius and talent, contempt for work and technique, and the strange aberration of indentifying imaginative literature with what he called "thinking in images." Belinsky (not as the civic, but as the romantic, critic) is largely responsible for the contempt of form and workmanship which just missed killing Russian literature in the sixties and seventies. It is, however, only fair to say that, if the most influential, Belinsky was not the only man who contributed to the infection. The weight of the sin rests on the whole generation.

NOTE: An excellent verse translation (unsigned) of the poem by Lermontov quoted on page 178 appeared in the *New Coterie* (London, 1926, No. 3).

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF REALISM: THE NOVELISTS (I)

1. ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF RUSSIAN REALISTIC NOVEL

THE realistic novel (a term that must be made to include shorter and less definite narrative forms as well as the full-sized novel) dominated Russian literature (roughly) from 1845 to 1905, almost to the exclusion of other forms of imaginative writing. To most foreign readers it is the most interesting thing in the whole language. It is Russia's principal contribution to *European* literature, if we take that term as denoting not the sum total of the national literatures of Europe, but the international literature belonging in an equal degree to all European mankind.

From Aksakov and Turgenev to Chekhov, and even to Gorky, Bunin, and other writers of the older generation of to-day, the Russian realistic novel may and must be regarded as one literary growth, with a unity even greater than, for instance, that of the Elizabethan drama. Of course there was movement and change inside the school. Chekhov's and Bunin's work is in many ways different from Aksakov's and Goncharov's, but taken all in all it answers to the same standards of taste and to the same conceptions of the function of art; while the work of Pushkin and Gogol in the earlier period, of Remizov and Bely in our days, proceeds from different conceptions, and has to be judged by different standards.

Russian realism * was born in the second half of the forties, more exactly in the years 1846–7. Its genealogy is mixed. In

* It will be noted in the course of the following that the term *realism* is used in Russia with a different shade of meaning from what it has in English.

substance it is a cross between the satirical naturalism of Gogol and an older sentimental realism, revived and represented in the thirties and forties chiefly by the then enormously influential George Sand. Gogol and George Sand were the father and mother of Russian realism and its accepted masters during the initial stages. Other foreign examples, especially that of Balzac, were not without their importance. The classical realism of Pushkin and Lermontov presided over the fusion of the heterogenous elements, and *Evgeni Onegin* and *A Hero of Our Times* influenced Russian realistic fiction very powerfully. Finally a factor of considerable importance in giving the Russian novel its idealistic and civic character was the evolution of the intellectual Moscow circles of the thirties and forties, and the definite form their idealism took in the latter decade. Belinsky especially played a part that can hardly be exaggerated. His critical writings of 1841–5 practically foretold the whole movement. Never did a literary development so exactly answer to the expectations entertained by a leading critic.

In the preceding chapter I have analysed the "naturalism" of Gogol, and spoken of his first followers. The fully developed Russian realism is different from the school of Gogol in that while Gogol's naturalism is suited only for the representation of the baser sides of humanity in their most vulgar and grotesque aspects, the realists emancipated themselves from this one-sidedness and took possession of the whole of life, not only of its ugly aspects. The task before them was to find satisfactory realistic forms for the painting of the higher and middle levels of humanity, of mixed good and evil, of the ordinary man, considered not as a caricature of mankind, but as a human being. Gogol himself had given hints in this direction by his sentimental treatment of vegetable life in *Old-World Landowners*, and by the "philanthropic" (as the phrase went) attitude to the small and ridiculous man in *The Greatcoat*. The "philanthropic" attitude was strengthened by George Sand (and to a less extent by Dickens), but the main influences that emancipated Russian realism from pure satire were Pushkin and Lermontov. Not that there was any "philanthropic" sentimentality in their works, but they gave the example of an

equal, level, human treatment of all humanity. The "philanthropic" attitude in its more sentimental forms did not much survive the forties, but its substance, a sympathetic attitude to human beings, without distinction (not only of class but) of intrinsic moral significance, became a principal characteristic of Russian realism. People are not good or bad; they are only more or less unhappy and deserving of sympathy—this may be taken as the formula of all the Russian novelists from Turgenev to Chekhov. This was what Europe accepted as their message to mankind when they were first revealed to the West.

Taken as a whole, Russian realism has little in common with Gogol, its professed master. What it inherited from him may be reduced to the following: In the first place, it retained his great attention to detail, vivifying and enlivening—the detail not only of outer things, but above all the detail of a person's appearance and movements. In this respect the continuer of Gogol was Tolstoy, otherwise so unlike him, who in his later work (after 1880) was the first to react against the method of "superfluous detail." In the second place, the realists endorsed Gogol's taboo-lifting work—the admission to the freedom of fiction of the vulgar, base, unprepossessing, and unedifying aspects of life. But no further taboos were lifted by them—the physical side of sex, as well as of disease and death, continued to be concealed, and though the rules of reticence in Russian realistic fiction were not the same as in Victorian England, it was as reticent in substance as the Victorian novel. A new taboo-lifting period was begun only half a century later by Tolstoy in his later work, and by Gorky. In the third place, the realists inherited from Gogol his satirical attitude to the existing forms of life. This is not quite so true of all the school as the preceding generalization, but on the whole a satirical attitude towards vegetable life and social routine pervades the Russian novel of the later nineteenth century.

Another characteristic which, though not common to all the realists, is typical of them as a school is their relative neglect of narrative construction and narrative interest, and the concentration on extra-narrative interest, on character and intro-

spection. In this respect the Russian novel, especially Tolstoy, was far ahead of the European novel of the times and was outdone by Western novelists only in the later work of Henry James, in that of Proust and of Mr. James Joyce.

Another important and general characteristic of the Russian realistic novel is quite opposed to the example of Gogol—this is its artistic simplicity, a consistent effort to make its style as unobtrusive and as unstriking as possible. The realists avoided all fine writing. What they regarded as good prose was prose adequate to the thing described, prose that answered to the reality it spoke of, transparent prose, that should not be noticed by the reader. This is the antithesis of Gogol's method, and was very largely due to the example of Pushkin and of Lermontov, especially of the latter.

Another obligation generally recognized by the realists was the duty of choosing their subjects exclusively from contemporary or almost contemporary Russian life. This was due not only to their honest desire to speak of nothing but what they actually knew, but also to the social position of fiction in mid- and late-nineteenth-century Russia. The novelists were expected to react, sensitively and significantly, to the current life of the nation. Partly owing to the severity of the censorship for other branches of literature, fiction from the forties onwards became an important and widely listened-to mouthpiece of social thinking, and the critics demanded that every time a novelist gave his work to the world it should contain things worth meditating on and worth analysing from the point of view of the social issues of the day. As a rule the novelists took the obligation very seriously and never ignored it, at least in their more ambitious work. This "social" (*obshchestvenny*) or "civic" (*grazhdansky*) colouring is a general characteristic of the European novel of the mid-nineteenth century, but it is nowhere more apparent than in Russia. It gives it an almost journalistic character, and makes it tempting as an actual source of information on Russian social history. It has been used in that way more than once by Russian and foreign authors, but of course this is bad method. Only persons ignorant alike of the nature of imaginative literature and of that of

historical evidence will attempt to use Russian fiction as an historical source, unless its evidence is corroborated by extra-literary sources, in which case it becomes superfluous.

2. THE EARLY WORK OF DOSTOYEVSKY

The first great success of the new school was Dostoyevsky's maiden novel, *Poor Folk*. In it and in the other early novels and tales of Dostoyevsky (up to 1849) the connexion of the new realism with Gogol is particularly apparent. This consideration makes it profitable to begin the survey of the individual realists with Dostoyevsky. On the other hand, Dostoyevsky's later work, the great series beginning with *Memoirs from Underground* and ending with the *Karamazovs*, is so in advance of its time, so closely connected with later developments, and went home to the reading public so much later, that it is impossible to make it precede the work of, say, Aksakov and Goncharov. So it is advisable, in a general history of Russian literature, to divide Dostoyevsky in two, an operation facilitated by the long break in his literary career caused by his conviction and deportation in 1849. His writings after his release from prison will be reserved for a following chapter, devoted to novelists the centre of gravity of whose work lies this side of 1861.

Theodore Mikhaylovich Dostoyévsky was born 30 October 1821, in Moscow. His father was a doctor at one of the big public hospitals of that city. The Dostoyevskys were a family of south-western (Volynian) origin, perhaps ultimately of gentle blood. The name is frequently mentioned in seventeenth-century documents. Most members of the family, which did not go over to Roman Catholicism, were priests. Such was the great writer's grandfather. His mother was the daughter of a Moscow merchant. So Dostoyevsky united Ukrainian and Muscovite blood.* Dr. Dostoyevsky was fairly well off, and

*The assertion of Mlle Dostoyevsky in her *Life* of her father that their family was of Lithuanian origin is true only in the sense that up to 1569 Volynia, whence the Dostoyevskys came, formed part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

with his earnings had succeeded in purchasing an estate, but he did not become a serf-owner, as the estate was "uninhabited." Very early Theodore and his elder brother Michael (afterwards his associate in journalism) developed a passion for reading, and Dostoyevsky's cult of Pushkin dates also from very early. The brothers learned at a private school in Moscow, whence in 1837 Theodore went to Petersburg, to the Military Engineers' School. He remained there for four years, not very deeply interested in engineering, but much more in literature and reading. His letters from school to his brother Michael are full of literary enthusiasms. In 1841 he obtained a commission, but continued his studies at the school for another year, after which he received a post in the Engineering Department. In return for his five years at school he was obliged to serve two years in the army. He did not remain in the service any longer than was obligatory, and resigned his commission in 1844. Dostoyevsky was not penniless, his father having left a small fortune, but he was impractical and improvident, and was thus often in financial difficulties. On leaving the service he decided to devote himself to literature and in the winter of 1844–5 wrote *Poor Folk*. Grigorovich, a beginning novelist of the new school, advised him to take the novel to Nekrasov, who was then planning the publication of a literary miscellany. On reading it Nekrasov was overwhelmed with admiration and took it to Belinsky. "A new Gogol has arisen!" he exclaimed, breaking into the critic's room. "Gogols grow like mushrooms in your imagination," Belinsky replied, but took and read the novel and was impressed with it as Nekrasov had been. A meeting was arranged between Dostoyevsky and Belinsky, and the latter poured out to the young novelist all his enthusiasm, exclaiming: "Do you yourself understand *what* you have written?" Dostoyevsky, remembering the whole business thirty years later, said that this was the happiest day of his life. *Poor Folk* appeared in January 1846 in Nekrasov's *Petersburg Miscellany* (*Peterburgsky Sbornik*). It was rapturously reviewed by Belinsky and by other critics friendly to the new school, and received with great favour by the public. Dostoyevsky did not take his success lightly—he was puffed with

pride; and curious anecdotes are recorded of his overbearing vanity. The immense success did not last. His second novel, *The Double*, published the same year as *Poor Folk*, had a much cooler reception. Dostoyevsky's relations with Belinsky and his friends began to spoil. The vanity he had shown on the occasion of his first novel was intensified by their disillusionment in his subsequent work. He was teased and ridiculed by Turgenev and ceased to frequent their company. His works continued appearing, but met with little approval. Though his friendship with the advanced literary coterie did not last, Dostoyevsky continued a radical and a westernizer. He was a member of the socialist circle of Petrashevsky, who gathered to read Fourier, to talk of socialism, and to criticize the existing conditions. The reaction that followed the Revolution of 1848 was fatal to the Petrashevskians: in April 1849 they were arrested. Dostoyevsky was confined in the Fortress and remained there for eight months, while a court-martial was inquiring and deciding on the fate of the "conspirators." The trial resulted in a conviction. Dostoyevsky was found guilty of "having taken part in criminal plans, of having circulated the letter of the journalist Belinsky [to Gogol] full of insolent expressions against the Orthodox Church and the Supreme Power, and of having attempted, together with others, to circulate anti-Government writings with the aid of a private press." He was sentenced to eight years' penal servitude. The sentence was commuted by the Emperor to four years, after which he was to serve as a private soldier. But instead of simply communicating the sentence to the prisoners a wantonly cruel tragicomedy was enacted: a sentence of death was read out to them, and preparations were made for shooting them. Only when the first batch of prisoners had already been tied to the posts the real sentences were read. All the prisoners naturally took the death sentence quite seriously. One of them went mad. Dostoyevsky never forgot the day: he remembers it twice in his writings, in *The Idiot* and in *An Author's Diary for 1873*. This took place on 22 December 1849. Two days later Dostoyevsky was taken off to Siberia,

where he was to serve his term. For nine years he drops out of literature.

Dostoyevsky's early work has suffered from the greatness of his later novels. We hardly recognize the author of *Memoirs from Underground* and of *The Possessed* in *Poor Folk* and its following. They add little that is commensurable with such tremendous creations as Svidrigaylov, Kirilov, or old Karamazov. For his own sake it is much more convenient to regard the young Dostoyevsky as a different writer from the author of *The Idiot;* a lesser writer, no doubt, but not a minor one, a writer with a marked originality and an important place among his contemporaries.

The principal feature that marks the young Dostoyevsky off from the other novelists of the forties and fifties is his particularly close connexion with Gogol. Unlike the others, and like Gogol, he concentrated on style. His is as tense and saturated as Gogol's, if not always as unerringly right. Like the other realists, he seeks, in *Poor Folk*, to transcend Gogol's purely satirical naturalism by infusing it with elements of sympathy and human emotion. But while the others sought to solve the problem by adopting a middle way between the extremes of the grotesque and of the sentimental, Dostoyevsky in a much more truly Gogolian spirit, and continuing, as it were, the tradition of *The Greatcoat*, sought to combine extreme grotesque naturalism with intense sentiment; without losing their individuality in a golden mean the two elements are fused together. In this respect Dostoyevsky is a genuine and worthy disciple of Gogol. But the message of *Poor Folk* is not Gogol's. It is not disgust at the vulgarity of life, but pity, intense sympathy for the downtrodden, half-dehumanized, ridiculous, and still noble human being. *Poor Folk* is the acme of the "philanthropic" literature of the forties, and has a foretaste of the wracking visions of pity that are such a lurid feature of the Dostoyevsky of the great novels. It is a novel of letters between a young girl who ends by going wrong and her elder friend, the government clerk Makar Devushkin. It is long, and the concentration on style is apt to lengthen

it. The style is not so uniformly perfect and interesting by itself as Gogol's is. But it is a carefully and cleverly constructed work of art, where all the details are made to contribute to the complex effect of the whole.

His second story, *The Double. A Poem* (*poema*—the same subtitle as that of *Dead Souls*, in Russian really *an epic, a narrative poem*), is also rooted in Gogol, and still more original. It is the story, told very elaborately, in great, almost *Ulysses*-like detail, and in a style intensely saturated with phonetic and rhythmical expressiveness, of a government clerk who goes mad, obsessed by the idea that a fellow clerk has usurped his identity. It is painful, almost intolerable reading. The reader's nerves are strung to breaking point. With the cruelty later on marked out by Mikhaylovsky as his characteristic feature, Dostoyevsky dwells at length and with convincing power on the sufferings of the humiliated human dignity of Mr. Golyadkin. But, for all its painfulness and unpleasantness, it gets such a grip on the reader that it is impossible not to read it at a sitting. In its own, perhaps illegitimate, kind of cruel literature (cruel although, or rather because, intended to be humorous) *The Double* is a perfect work of art. Closely connected with it is the still stranger and madder third story of Dostoyevsky, *Mr. Prokharchin* (1847), the weirdly raving story, in places deliberately obscure and unintelligible, of the death of a miser who had accumulated a fortune while living in abject filth in a wretched slum.

Of the other stories of Dostoyevsky's first period the most notable are *The Landlady* (1848) and *Netochka Nezvanova* (1849). The former is unexpectedly romantic. The dialogue is in an elevated, rhetorical style, imitative of the diction of folk-poetry and strongly reminiscent of Gogol's *Terrible Vengeance.* The story is far less consistent and perfect than the first three, but there is in it a more definite foretaste of the later Dostoyevsky. The heroine seems to be a foreboding of the demon-ridden women of the great novels. But in style and composition it is derivative—too deeply dependent on Gogol, Hoffmann, and Balzac. *Netochka Nezvanova* was planned on a vaster scale than any one of the preceding novels. Its com-

pletion was interrupted by Dostoyevsky's arrest and conviction. It remains a powerful and somewhat mysterious fragment. It is full of that heavy and overstrung tension familiar to the reader of *The Idiot* and *The Karamazovs*, which is largely arrived at by simple, easily analysable devices. The heroine, whose childhood and girlhood are the subject of the story, the stepdaughter of a poor musician brought up in a rich house, is the first of those proud women of Dostoyevsky's, a predecessor of Dunya (*Crime and Punishment*), of Aglaia (*The Idiot*), and of Katerina Ivanovna (*The Karamazovs*).

3. AKSAKOV

Dostoyevsky's method of evolving a new style by the *fusion* of extremes was not followed by any of his contemporaries, who preferred to arrive at a golden mean by the avoidance of extremes. This triumph of a *middle* style is the characteristic feature of Russian realism from the forties to Chekhov. It was first achieved in the work of three writers, all of them belonging to the settled and propertied class of gentlemen, and not to the rootless plebeian intelligentsia: Aksakov, Goncharov and Turgenev.

The oldest of them was Aksakov. He was a man of a much older generation, older even than either Pushkin or Griboyedov, and has consequently many features to distinguish him from the strictly realistic generation. But he was born to literature through the influence (exercised to a rather unexpected result) of Gogol, and all his work belongs to the period of the realistic triumph.

Sergey Timofeevich Aksákov was born in 1791 in Ufa, the centre of the then recently colonized Bashkiria and the capital of the Province of Orenburg. The history of his parents and grandparents is familiar to all readers of Russian literature, for he has told it with almost historical veracity in the most popular of his books, *A Family Chronicle*. His grandfather Aksakov (the Stepan Mikhaylovich Bagrov of the *Family Chronicle*) was a rough and energetic pioneering squire, who had been among the first to plant a colony of Russian serfs

in the Bashkirian steppe. His son, the writer's father, received a scant education, but married a girl of a very different type of family, the daughter of a typical "enlightened official" of the eighteenth century. She had received an advanced education, on a foundation of moralistic piety and Rousseau-ist sensibility, and it was on this foundation that she founded the education of her son. He was brought up in an atmosphere of intense love and care, and was never harshly or severely dealt with. His sensibility and his intellectual receptivity developed very early. It was an education that provided for a high culture and a high moral sense, but hardly an active attitude towards life. He was sent to school at eight, but falling homesick was taken back, and returned there only two years later. During his presence there the gymnasium of Kazan was expanded into a university (1804), and Aksakov more or less automatically took his degree.

On taking his degree Aksakov went to Petersburg, and took work as a government clerk. He was introduced to the circles of the literary conservatives, and was patronized by Admiral Shishkov, of whom he has left us a delightful character sketch. He also took a keen interest in the theatre and mixed with prominent actors. In 1815 Aksakov married. His wife proved the worthy mother of a large family and a pillar of domestic virtues. After his marriage he settled down on his estate with the intention of devoting himself to its management, but after ten years of fruitless efforts, having somewhat shattered his rural fortune, he abandoned the attempt and came to Moscow in search of official employment. There his old friend Shishkov, now Minister of Education, obtained for him a post in the Censorship. Aksakov remained a censor for more than ten years without distinguishing himself in this capacity either for good or bad. He contracted new literary friendships, again among minor and out-of-date writers, chiefly playwrights. Aksakov's friendship with Shishkov had been the expression of his own profound attachment for everything that was Russian, and free from the taint of cosmopolitanism. This attitude was strengthened by the influence of his wife. Their house became a stronghold of pure Russianism in Moscow so-

ciety. When the Slavophil movement began, it naturally found a principal support in that family. Aksakov's two sons, Constantine and Ivan, became prominent Slavophil leaders. In 1832 Aksakov met Gogol and recognized in him what he had failed to see in Pushkin, or any other man, a purely Russian genius. Aksakov's house became the temple of the cult of that writer, and Aksakov its high priest.

In 1830 Aksakov left the Civil Service and henceforward lived the easy life of a Moscow gentleman of comfortable means, continuing to keep up intimate relations with Slavophil intellectual circles. In Gogol he was ultimately greatly disillusioned. There is a profoundly personal bitterness in his letters to his former idol written after 1846. But it was Gogol, and Gogol alone, who had awakened Aksakov to literary activity.

Aksakov had dabbled in literature ever since boyhood. But the nationalists and conservatives of before 1830 had nothing to show him in the way of literary forms but those of French classicism, and classicism especially in its higher *genres* was profoundly uncongenial to the rural mind of Aksakov. In the translations, adaptations, and essays in which he paid homage between 1810 and 1830 to the school of Boileau Aksakov is nothing but a mediocre dilettante. Gogol's genius was in essence as profoundly uncongenial to Aksakov's as Racine's or Kheraskov's, but it was Gogol who revealed to him the possibility of a new attitude towards reality, an attitude that had not been foreseen by the classicists—the possibility of taking life as it comes, of making use of the whole material of life, without necessarily forcing it into the moulds of classical form. Of course this truth might have been revealed to Aksakov in some other way besides the evidently more-than-that route of Gogol, but it so happened that it was Gogol's art that removed the film of obligatory stylization from Aksakov's eyes. His first attempt in a new, realistic manner was a short descriptive story, *The Blizzard*, printed in 1834. It is distinctly experimental and immature. Towards 1840, urged by Gogol, Aksakov began writing the *Family Chronicle*, substantial fragments of which were published anonymously in 1846, in a Slavophil miscellany. In the following years Aksakov published a

series of books on sport in his native Orenburg country. *Notes on Angling* (1847) was his first work to appear in book form. It was followed by *Notes on Shooting in the Orenburg Country* (1852). These books, with their lucid, simple, unaffected, and extraordinarily vivid painting of nature and of animal life aroused great enthusiasm. They were enthusiastically reviewed by Turgenev, and Gogol wrote to the author: "Your birds and fishes are more alive than my men and women." When in 1856 appeared *A Family Chronicle* (together with *Recollections*), Aksakov saw himself recognized by the most influential critics as the foremost living writer. He increased his literary output. In 1858 he published *Years of Childhood of Bagrov-Grandson*, and wrote the greater part of the contents of his collected works in those last remaining years. In 1858 he fell ill, but, though tied to his bed, continued working. He died on 30 April 1859, while working at *Natasha*, a story that was to be a record of the life of his younger sister.

The principal characteristic of Aksakov's work is its objectivity. His art is purely receptive. Even when he is introspective, as he is in the greater part of *Years of Childhood*, he is objectively introspective. He remains unmoved by any active desire except that of finding once again the time that has gone lost—"*retrouver le temps perdu.*" The Proustian phrase is not out of place, for Aksakov's sensibility is curiously and strikingly akin to that of the French novelist; only he was as sane and normal as Proust was perverse and morbid, and instead of the close and stuffy atmosphere of the never aired flat of the Boulevard Haussmann there breathes in Aksakov's books the air of the open steppe. Like Proust, Aksakov is all senses. There is nothing in his work *quod non fuerit in sensibus*, that was not at first in the senses. His style is transparent, it is as if it were not. One does not notice it, for it is entirely adequate to *what* it expresses. It possesses, moreover, a beautiful Russian purity and an air of distinction and unaffected grace that gives it a fair chance of being recognized as the best, the standard, Russian prose. If it has a defect, it is the defect of its merit—a certain placidity, a certain excessive "creaminess," a lack of the thin, "daimonic," moun-

tain air of poetry. It is of the earth earthy; the air one breathes in it is a fresh and open air, but it is the air of the lowermost atmospheric layers of a country without mountains. This is why, all said and done, it has to be regarded as second in quality when compared with Lermontov's.

The most characteristic and Aksakovian of Aksakov's books is unquestionably *Years of Childhood of Bagrov-Grandson.** It is here that his Proustian characteristics are most apparent, and the *levelness* of his world is particularly evident. There is no incident in *Years of Childhood.* It is the story of a peaceful and uneventful childhood, exceptional only for the exceptional sensibility of a child encouraged by an exceptionally sympathetic education. The most memorable passages in it are perhaps those which refer to nature, for instance the wonderful account of the coming of spring in the steppe. Many readers who prefer incident to the everyday, and the exceptional to the humdrum, find *Years of Childhood* tedious. But if ordinary life, unruffled by unusual incident, is a legitimate subject of literature, Aksakov in *Years of Childhood* wrote a masterpiece of realistic narrative. In it he came nearer than any other Russian writer, even than Tolstoy in *War and Peace,* to a modern, evolutionary, continuous presentation of human life, as distinct from the dramatic and incidental presentation customary to the older novelists.

A Family Chronicle is less exclusively personal and more entertaining. It is fuller of incident, and, being the story of the author's grandparents and parents before his own birth, it is necessarily free from introspection. It is also strikingly and unusually objective. The story of a great pioneering serf-owner is told, and the picture of the golden age of the serf-owners under Catherine drawn without wrath or love. It is so dispassionate that it could be used by socialists as a weapon to strike at the Russian gentry, and by conservatives to defend it. Russian rural life, especially on those thinly

* Here and in *A Family Chronicle* Aksakov uses fictitious names for real places and people. *Bagrov* and *Bagrovo* are *Aksakov* and *Aksakovo.* In *Recollections* the real names are used.

peopled borderlands, was strongly reminiscent of mediæval, or rather even of patriarchal, conditions. The landlord had nothing above him except God, with whom he felt himself in essential understanding, and the Tsar, who sanctioned his power and had practically no way of reaching him. These conditions bred men of biblical dimensions. Stepan Mikhaylovich Bagrov is a patriarch, strong, righteous, kind, generous, fearless, but strongly conscious of his rights and with no sentimental scruples as to using them. Another aspect of a great serf-owner is drawn in the wicked Kuralesov, who marries Bagrov's cousin, and is ultimately brought back to the ways of lawfulness by Bagrov. The latter part of the book narrates the story of the wooing of Sophie Zubova by Aksakov's father. Here also there is a monumental, biblical, Homeric simplicity that gives the figure of Sophie Zubova something like heroic proportions. His father is treated much less heroically—he is one of the most remarkable figures of the *ordinary* man in Russian fiction. The whole episode is perfect from beginning to end and is quite unique in modern literature for its tone at once so primevally magnifying and so scrupulously objective.

The other works of Aksakov are less nearly unique achievements, and of less universal appeal. *Recollections* is the story of his life from eight to sixteen. Its earlier parts display, though in a lesser degree, the same qualities as *Years of Childhood.* The latter part is interesting in a more social way rather as a picture of Russian provincial culture about 1805 than as a revelation of a great literary temperament. The same may be said of his *Literary and Theatrical Reminiscences,* where he tells of his relations with the actors and playwrights of 1810–30. They are delightful and at times amusing, but the portraits he paints are visual impressions left on a sensitive retina, not profound intuitions into other people's souls. The same applies to the delightful fragment on *Admiral Shishkov,* but not to the remarkable *Recollections of Gogol.* These have a place apart. Aksakov was not as a rule a student of other people's minds. He took people as they came, as parts of his world, and gave them a sensual, rather than a mental, reality. But in the case of Gogol the elusive and evasive personality

of the great writer caused him such bitter disappointment and disillusionment that he was forced to make an exceptional effort to understand the workings of the strange man's mind, where genius and baseness were so strangely combined. The effort was painful, but extraordinarily successful, and Aksakov's memoir is to this day our principal approach to the problem of Gogol.

4. GONCHAROV

Aksakov's objectivity and impartiality is enough to mark him off from the rest of the Russian novelists of the mid-nineteenth century. The latter, all of them, either were, or seemed to be, or tried to be, novelists with a purpose; and their work may almost invariably be described as problem stories.

Two of the greatest successes of the literary spring of 1846–7 were the two problem novels, *Whose Fault?* by Herzen and *Polinka Sachs* by Druzhinin, but the greatest of the problem novelists are of course Turgenev and Goncharov.

Alexander Ivanovich Goncharov was born in 1812 in Simbirsk. His family, though officially merchants, practically belonged to the gentry, and Goncharov grew up in the conditions typical of the provincial gentry. He studied at the University of Moscow, at the same time as Lermontov and as Belinsky, but mixed with neither. On taking his degree he entered the Civil Service in St. Petersburg. He remained all his life a Civil Servant, at first in the Ministry of Finance, afterwards, when in 1856 it was decided to liberalize the Censorship, as a censor. He never married, and his life was uneventful. He loved his comfort and his habits, and he had not a little in common with the hero of his novel, Oblomov. The only events of his life are his literary activities and his voyage to the Far East. His first novel, *A Common Story*, appeared in 1847 and was greeted by Belinsky as, next to *Poor Folk*, the masterpiece of the incipient realistic school. It was followed in 1849 by *The Dream of Oblomov*, which was the first germ of his most famous novel. In 1853 Goncharov casually expressed the wish to go

to the Far East on a war-ship as secretary to a mission to Japan. He was taken at his word and only when it was too late realized that he was obliged to go, at the risk of appearing very ridiculous. He did not enjoy the long sea-voyage—he found the ocean shockingly devoid of orderliness. But he avidly absorbed every kind of new visual and human impression and kept a diary. During the voyage war broke out with England, and Goncharov had to return to Petersburg by the exceedingly long and inconvenient way of Okhotsk, Yakutsk, and Irkutsk. He was happy to be back in his comfortable flat in Petersburg and, now it was over, to remember his heroic journey. His travelling-notes appeared in 1856 under the title of *The Frigate "Pallada."* In 1858 he completed and published *Oblomov*, begun more than ten years earlier. Its success was immense and definitely made him a national classic. He had begun working at a third novel, *The Precipice*, almost simultaneously with *Oblomov* and continued working at it after the publication of the latter. It took him almost twenty years to write it. It appeared in 1869 and met with much less success, partly owing to its lesser merits, partly owing to the hostility of the radicals, who resented the caricature he made of them in one of the characters. *The Precipice* is connected with a curious development in Goncharov's life, which borders on insanity. At an early stage of its progress he had read fragments of the novel to Turgenev and ever since then he was obsessed by the idea that Turgenev had stolen all the ideas contained in them, and was not only making use of them in his own work, but communicating them to all his Russian and foreign friends. Not only *Fathers and Sons*, but novels by Auerbach and Flaubert's *Éducation Sentimentale* were recognized by Goncharov as plagiarized from *The Precipice*. He ascribed the insuccess of his novel to its having been thus robbed before its publication. He wrote an account of his wrongs as they appeared to him in a curious document entitled *An Uncommon Story* (1872). This psychopathic document, only recently published, has revealed an unexpected aspect of a writer who had always been regarded as the incarnation of staid respectability.

After *The Precipice* Goncharov wrote little—some recollections of his early years, an essay on Griboyedov, which has had the good, or ill, fortune of being singled out by schoolmasters and professors of literature for special admiration, and a series of sketches on *Old Servants*, which have had the equally doubtful advantage of being used in England as texts for beginners in Russian. He died in 1891. It is characteristic of his old-bachelor ways that he bequeathed the copyright of his works to the family of an old servant.

Goncharov's place as a Russian classic is almost entirely based on the second of his three novels—*Oblomov*. The other two are on a distinctly inferior level. *A Common Story* is a neatly constructed *roman à thèse*, showing in an almost mathematically elegant succession of episodes the disillusionment of a young idealist in his generous, but unpractical, ideals. The success of *A Common Story* was due chiefly to its thesis, and was a sign of the times, which were shifting their allegiance from the generous ideals of the thirties to the positive and practical progressiveness of the reign of Alexander II. Nor is *The Precipice*, the third of Goncharov's novels, a masterpiece. It displays all his shortcomings: an absence of imagination; an extreme subjectivity in psychological painting, and the consequent lifelessness of all the characters that are not founded on introspection; an absence of poetry, and of real inspiration; and an unsurmountable *smallness* of soul. It may be said that all is unsatisfactory in *The Precipice* except the picture, based on his reminiscences of childhood, of the patriarchal, despotic, and kindly grandmamma, and of her life at once spacious and economical, in her vast, almost rural estate in the city, overhanging "the precipice" above the Volga. The ineffective hero, Raysky, is a pale and generalized reflection of the author's self. The proud and passionate heroine, Vera, is badly missed, and the nihilist Mark Volokhov, is simply flat and absurd.

Oblomov is a different business. It is a great book. The current schoolmaster and professor-of-literature view of Goncharov is that he was a great stylist and a great *objective* painter of reality. This view is ludicrously wrong: in both

cases almost the contrary is true. Goncharov's prose is, like Aksakov's and Turgenev's, a golden mean, but while Aksakov's and Turgenev's has all the beauty of measure, Goncharov's has all the flatness of mediocrity. Aksakov's and Turgenev's is mediocrity in the Aristotelian, Goncharov's in the ordinary English sense of the word. It lacks both the beautiful plenitude and abundance of Aksakov's, and the grace and sweetness of Turgenev's. As to his objectivity, Goncharov was as incapable of seeing into another human being as Gogol had been. He had eyes and he had introspection. He was capable of seeing and recording external things and he was capable of evolving out of his inner self more or less sublimated reflections. The greatest of these reflections is Oblomov. Oblomov is more than a character; he is a symbol. The fact that he is drawn with the aid of none but purely and modestly realistic methods only enhances the force of the symbolism. He obviously was, and was immediately recognized to be, the embodiment of a whole side of the Russian soul, or rather of a side of the soul of the Russian gentry—its sloth and ineffectiveness. He has a high sense of values. He is open to generous aspirations, but incapable of effort or discipline. The fragment of the novel which first appeared in print—*Oblomov's Dream*—is a vast, synthetically intended picture of the life of the Russian rural gentry, the soil of vegetable comfort, easy wealth, and irresponsibility, which grew the flower of Oblomov. *Oblomov's Dream* is contained in the first part of the novel, the best known and the most frequently commented on. We are shown Oblomov in his Petersburg flat—the way he spends his day, between his bed and his dressing-gown. The slow and leisurely narrative is calculated to enchance the impression of being hopelessly and irremediably stuck in slimy sloth. It takes Oblomov a whole chapter to get out of bed. His spacious dressing-gown, to quote Miss Harrison, dominates the whole story, as "an Ibsenian symbol" "of the impossibility of being well groomed, physically or mentally." Oblomov's manservant, Zakhar, is in complete harmony with his master. Then the contrast to Oblomov is introduced, the practical and energetic Stolz, characteristically represented as half a German, a dev-

otee to work and efficiency. It is here that Goncharov's intellectual and moral insufficiency comes out: Stolz is hopelessly uninteresting and flat. Of course the whole of the author's subconscious and imaginative sympathy is with Oblomov, but Goncharov, the bureaucrat and the *littérateur*, in trying to endow the hero of work, Stolz, with all he could imagine of efficient virtue, only revealed his own smallness. In the second part Oblomov is shown in a love-affair which falls flat because he cannot tear himself away from the torpor of his slovenly habits and finally disgusts the long-patient lady. Like all Goncharov's love-stories (and in spite of its autobiographical foundation) it is very inadequate and the heroine as unconvincing as Vera in *The Precipice*. The third and fourth parts are less often quoted and read in schools, but they are unquestionably the highest achievement of Goncharov.* Oblomov, yielding more and more to his slovenly indolence, which always remains poisoned by a sting of dissatisfaction, drops out of society. His landlady, an uneducated young woman, Agafia Mikhaylovna, loves him and becomes his mistress. She loves him sincerely and pathetically, but she is dominated by her people, unscrupulous rascals who exploit Oblomov's love for her to cajole and blackmail him out of all his possessions. In spite of the energetic intervention of the ever energetic and efficient Stolz, Oblomov sinks lower and lower into the ooze of his new surroundings and dies in the arms of Agafia Mikhaylovna, to her despair and to the rejoicing of her people. The atmosphere of inevitable doom gradually descending on Oblomov, the irrevertible action of the slime sucking him in, is conveyed with truly wonderful power. Russian realistic fiction is rich in stories of overpowering gloom, but none of them (with the exception of Saltykov's great novel) excels in this respect the high achievement of Goncharov in the third and fourth parts of *Oblomov*.

Goncharov, like Aksakov, and more than Turgenev, is characteristic of the tendency of the Russian novel to do without all narrative interest. There are no events or happenings in *Oblomov;* there are in *The Precipice*, but dealt with in so flat

* In the English translation they are abridged out of all recognition.

and puerile a manner that the less said the better. There is nothing but the continous, evolutionary unfolding of an inevitable development. This is what Miss Harrison has called the "imperfective" tendency of the Russian novel—the "imperfective" being that form of the Russian verb which views the action *in the process* of happening. The tendency dominates all Russian fiction after the times of Lermontov, except the plebeian novelists—Leskov and Pisemsky. But nowhere is it so all-prevailing and so justified as in *Oblomov*, for here the evolutionary determinism of the manner (which is in fact the negation of the efficacy of human will) is in complete harmony with the indolent and impotent determinism of the hero.

5. TURGENEV

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev was born on 28th October 1818 in Orel. His father was a handsome but impoverished squire, who had served in the cavalry, and possessed a great attraction for the other sex. He married Mlle Lutovinova, an heiress, older than himself. She had had a very unhappy childhood and girlhood and adored her husband, who never loved her. This combined with the control of a large fortune to make of Mme Turgenev an embittered and intolerable domestic tyranny. Though she was attached to her son, she treated him with exasperating despotism, and with her serfs and servants was plainly cruel. It was in his mother's house that the future author of *A Sportsman's Sketches* saw serfdom in its least attractive form.

In 1833 Turgenev entered the University of Moscow, but remained there only one year, for in 1834 his mother moved to Petersburg and he went over to the other university. He studied under Pushkin's friend, Professor Pletnev, and had occasion to meet the great poet himself. His first verses were published in Pletnev's, formerly Pushkin's, *Sovremennik* (1838). This connexion with the "literary aristocracy" is of importance: alone of all his contemporaries Turgenev had a living link with the age of poetry. He took his degree in 1837, and in the following year he went to Berlin to complete his philo-

sophical education at the university that had been the abode and was still the temple of Hegel—the divinity of the young generation of Russian idealists. Several of them, including Stankevich and Granovsky, Turgenev met at Berlin, and henceforward he became the friend and ally of the westernizers. His three years at Berlin (1838–41) imbued him with a life-long love for Western civilization and for Germany. When in 1841 he returned to Russia he at first intended to devote himself to a university career. As this did not come off, he entered the Civil Service, but there also he remained only two years, and after 1845 abandoned all pursuits except literature. His work at first was chiefly in verse, and in the mid-forties he was regarded, chiefly on the strength of the narrative poem *Parasha* (1843), as one of the principal hopes of the young generation in poetry.

In 1845 Turgenev fell out with his mother, who ceased to give him money, and for the following years, till her death, he had to live the life of a literary Bohemian. The reason for Mme Turgenev's displeasure was partly that she resented her son's leaving the Civil Service and becoming a scribbler of a dangerous, revolutionary kind, but especially that she strongly disapproved of his infatuation for the famous singer Pauline Garcia (Mme Viardot). This infatuation proved to be the love of his life. Mme Viardot tolerated it and liked Turgenev's company, and so he was able most of his life to live near her. In 1847 he went abroad, following her, and returned only in 1850, at the news of his mother's dangerous illness. On her death he found himself the possessor of a large fortune.

Meanwhile Turgenev had abandoned verse for prose. In 1847 Nekrasov's *Sovremennik* started the publication of the short stories that were to form *A Sportsman's Sketches*. They appeared in book form in 1852, and this, together with the publication about the same time of other stories, gave Turgenev one of the first places, if not the first, among Russian writers. *A Sportsman's Sketches* was a great social as well as a literary event. On the background of the complete silence of those years of reaction, the *Sketches*, seemingly harmless if taken one by one, produced a cumulative effect of considerable power.

Their consistent presentation of the serf as a being not only human, but superior in humanity to his masters, made the book a loud protest against the system of serfdom. It is said to have produced a strong impression on the future Emperor Alexander II, and caused in him the decision to do away with the system. Meanwhile the authorities were alarmed. The censor who had passed the book was ordered to leave the service. Shortly after that an obituary notice of Gogol by Turgenev, written in what seemed to the police a too enthusiastic tone, led to his arrest and banishment to his estate, where he remained eighteen months (1852–3). When he was released, he came to Petersburg already in the full glory of success. He became the centre of the literary world. For several years he was the *de facto* head of Petersburg literature, and his judgment and decisions had the force of law.

The first years of Alexander II's reign were the summer of Turgenev's popularity. No one profited more than he from the unanimity of the progressive and reforming enthusiasm that had got hold of Russian society. He was accepted as its spokesman. His ideas seemed to answer to the resultant of everyone's aspirations. He touched almost every chord to which the public was then responsive. In his early sketches and stories he had denounced serfdom; in *Rudin* (1855) paid homage to the idealism of the elder generation while exposing its inefficiency; in *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (1858) glorified all that was noble in the old Orthodox ideals of the old gentry; in *On the Eve* (1860) attempted to paint the heroic figure of a young girl of the new generation. He was unquestioned. Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky, the leaders of advanced opinion, chose his works for the texts of their journalistic sermons. His art answered to the demands of everyone. It was civic but not "tendentious." It painted life as it was, and chose for its subjects the most burning problems of the day. It was full of truth, and at the same time of poetry and beauty. It satisfied Left and Right. It was the mean term, the middle style for which the forties had groped in vain. It avoided in an equal measure the pitfalls of grotesque caricature and of sentimental "philanthropy." It was perfect. Turgenev was

very sensitive to his success, and particularly sensitive to the praise of the young generation and of advanced opinion, whose spokesman he appeared, and aspired, to be.

The only thing he had been censured for (or rather, as everyone believed in the photographic veracity of Turgenev's representation of Russia, it was not he, but Russian life, that was found fault with) was that, while he had given such a beautiful succession of heroines, he had failed to give a Russian hero; it was noticed that when he had wanted a man of action he had chosen a Bulgarian (Insarov in *On the Eve*). This led the critics to surmise that he believed a Russian hero an impossibility. Now Turgenev decided to make up for this shortcoming and give a real Russian man of action—a hero of the young generation. This he did in Bazarov, the nihilist hero of *Fathers and Sons* (1861). He created him with love and admiration, but the result was unexpected. The radicals were indignant. This, they said, was a caricature and no hero. This nihilist, with his militant materialism, with his negation of all religious and æsthetic values and his faith in nothing but frogs (the dissection of frogs was the mystical rite of Darwinian naturalism and anti-spiritualism), was a caricature of the young generation drawn to please the reactionaries. The radicals raised a hue and cry against Turgenev, who was proclaimed to have "written himself out." A little later, it is true, a still younger and more extreme section of radicals, in the person of the brilliant young critic Pisarev, reverted the older radicals' verdict, accepted the name of nihilist and recognized in Bazarov the ideal to be followed. But this belated recognition from the extreme Left did not console Turgenev for the profound wound inflicted on him by the first reception given to Bazarov by the older radicals. He was cut to the heart and decided to abandon Russia and Russian literature. He was abroad when *Fathers and Sons* appeared and the campaign against him began. He remained abroad in the shade of Mme Viardot, at first in Baden-Baden and after 1871 in Paris, and never returned to Russia except for short periods. His decision to abandon literature found expression in the fragment of lyrical prose *Enough*, where he gave full play to his pessimism

and disillusionment. He did not, however, abandon literature, and continued writing to his death. But in by far the greater part of his later work he turned away from contemporary Russia, so distasteful and unresponsive to him, towards the times of his childhood, the old Russia of before the reforms. Most of his work after 1862 is either frankly memoirs, or fiction built out of the material of early experience. He was loath, however, to resign himself to the fate of a writer who had outlived his times. Twice again he attempted to tackle the problems of the day in big works of fiction. In *Smoke* (1867) he gave full vent to his bitterness against all classes of Russian society; and in *Virgin Soil* (1876) he attempted to give a picture of the revolutionary movement of the seventies. But the two novels only emphasized his growing estrangement from living Russia, the former by its impotent bitterness, the latter by its lack of information and of all sense of reality in the treatment of the powerful movement of the seventies. Gradually, however, as party feeling, at least in literature, sank, Turgenev returned into his own (the popularity of his *early* work had never diminished). The revival of "æsthetics" in the later seventies contributed to a revival of his popularity, and his last visit to Russia in 1880 was a triumphant progress.

In the mean time, especially after he settled down in Paris, Turgenev became intimate with French literary circles—with Mérimée, Flaubert, and the young naturalists. His works began to be translated into French and German, and before long his fame became international. He was the first Russian author to win a European reputation. In the literary world of Paris he became an important personality. He was one of the first to discern the talent of the young Maupassant, and Henry James (who included an essay on Turgenev in a volume on *French* novelists) and other beginning writers looked up to him as to a master. When he died, Renan, with pardonable lack of information, proclaimed that it was through Turgenev that Russia, so long mute,* had at last become vocal. Turgenev felt much more at home among his French *confrères*

* One will remember the words of Carlyle on "mute Russia" written in 1840, three years after the death of Pushkin!

than among his Russian equals (with most of whom, including Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Nekrasov, he sooner or later quarrelled), and there is a striking difference between the impressions he produced on foreigners and on Russians. Foreigners were always impressed by the grace, charm, and sincerity of his manner. With Russians he was arrogant and vain, and no amount of hero-worship could make his Russian visitors blind to these disagreeable characteristics. He was in stature a giant, and his movements were graceful and well-bred, but his squeaky voice, coming as it did from the body of a lion, produced a strange impression.

Soon after his last visit to Russia Turgenev fell ill. He died on 22 August 1883 in the small commune of Bougival, on the Seine, below Paris.

Turgenev's first attempt at prose fiction * was in the wake of Lermontov, from whom he derived the romantic halo round his first Pechorin-like heroes (*Andrey Kolosov*, *The Duellist*, *Three Portraits*) and the method of the intensified anecdote (*The Jew*). These stories belong to the years 1844–6, before Turgenev had finally abandoned verse writing. In *A Sportsman's Sketches*, begun in 1847, he was to free himself from the romantic conventions of these early stories by abandoning all narrative skeleton and limiting himself to "slices of life." But even for some time after that date he remained unable in his more distinctly narrative work to hit on what was to become his true manner. Thus, for instance, *Three Meetings* (1851) is a story of pure atmosphere woven round a very slender foundation of theme, saturated in its descriptions of moonlit nights with an excess of romantic and "poetical" poetry that contrasts with the soberly sure touch already displayed in the descriptive passages of the *Sketches*. *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* (1851) is reminiscent of Gogol and of the young Dostoyevsky, developing as it does the Dostoyevskian theme of humiliated human dignity and of morbid delight in humiliation, but aspiring to a Gogol-like and very un-Turgenevian, verbal intensity. (The phrase "a superfluous man"—*lishniy chelovek*—had an

* For the poetic work of Turgenev see chapter V, 6; for his dramatic work, chapter VII.

extraordinary fortune, much greater than that of the story itself, and is still applied by literary and social historians to the type of ineffective idealist portrayed so often by Turgenev and his contemporaries, and of which Oblomov and Rudin are the two principal expressions.) At last *Mumu* (1852), the well-known story of the deaf serf and his favourite dog, and of how his mistress ordered it to be destroyed, is a "philanthropic" story in the tradition of *The Greatcoat* and of *Poor Folk*, where an intense sensation of pity is arrived at by methods that strike the modern reader as illegitimate, working on the nerves rather than on the imagination.

A Sportsman's Sketches, on the other hand, written in 1847–51, belongs to the highest, most lasting, and least questionable achievement of Turgenev, and of Russian realism. The book consists of short sketches, which can hardly be termed stories, describing the casual and various meetings of the narrator during his wanderings with a gun and a dog in his native district of Bolkhov, and in the surrounding country. *The Sketches* are arranged in a random order. They have no narrative skeleton, containing nothing but accounts of what the narrator saw and heard. Some of them are purely descriptive, of scenery (*Forest and Steppe*) or character (*Khor and Kalinych*). Others consist of conversation, addressed to the narrator (*A Hamlet of Shchigry District*) or overheard (*The Tryst, Bezhin Meadow*). At times there is a dramatic *motive*, but the development is only hinted at by the successive glimpses the narrator gets of his personages (*Ermolay and the Miller's Wife*). This absolute matter-of-factness and studious avoidance of everything artificial and made-up was the most prominent characteristic of the book when it appeared—it was a new *genre*. The peasants are described from the outside, as seen (or overseen) by the narrator, not in their intimate, unoverlooked life. As I have said, they are drawn with obviously greater sympathy than the upper classes. The squires are represented as either vulgar, or cruel, or ineffective. In the peasants Turgenev emphasized their humanity, their imaginativeness, their poetical and artistic giftedness (*The Singers, Kassian from the Krasivaya Mecha, Bezhin Meadow*), their

sense of dignity, their intelligence. It was in this quiet and unobtrusive way that the book struck the readers with the injustice and ineptitude of serfdom. Now, when the issue of serfdom is a thing of the past, the *Sketches* seem once more as harmless and as innocent as a book can be, and it requires a certain degree of historical imagination to reconstruct the atmosphere in which they had the effect of a mild bomb-shell.

Judged as literature, the *Sketches* are frequently, if not always, above praise. If the portrait of the idealist of the forties (*A Hamlet of Shchigry District*) is only a preparatory sketch towards Rudin and others, in the representation of rural scenery and peasant character Turgenev never surpassed such masterpieces as *The Singers* and *Bezhin Meadow*.* *The Singers* especially, even after *First Love* and *Fathers and Sons*, may claim to be his crowning achievement and the quintessence of all the most unique qualities of his art. It is the description of a singing-match at a village pub between the peasant Yashka Turok and a tradesman from Zhizdra. The spontaneous genius of Yashka is made to triumph over the elaborate technique of the man from Zhizdra. The beauty of the thing in Russian is above description; that it *can* be conveyed in a translation is proved by Henry James's appreciation. The story is representative of Turgenev's manner of painting his peasants: he does not one-sidedly idealize them; the impression produced by the match, with its revelation of the singers' high sense of artistic values, is qualified by the drunken orgy the artists lapse into after the match is over and the publican treats Yashka to the fruit of his history. *The Singers* may also be taken as giving Turgenev's prose at its highest and most characteristic. It is careful and in a sense artificial, but the impression of absolute ease and simplicity is exhaled from every word and turn of phrase. It is a carefully *selected* language, rich, but curiously avoidant of words and phrases, crude or journalese, that might jar on the reader. The beauty of the landscape painting is due chiefly to the choice of exact and delicately suggestive and descriptive words. There is no or-

* It is interesting to note that these two pieces are precisely those Henry James singles out for particular praise.

namental imagery after the manner of Gogol, no rhetorical rhythm, no splendid cadences. But the sometime poet's and poets' disciple's hand is evident in the careful, varied, and unobtrusively perfect balance of the phrases.

The first thing Turgenev wrote after the *Sketches* and *Mumu* was *The Inn* (1852). It may be regarded as opening the succession of his mature stories, though, unlike those that followed, its subject is taken from the life of the people. Like *Mumu* it turns on the unjust and callous treatment of serfs by their masters, but the sentimental, "philanthropic" element is replaced, for the first time, in his work by the characteristic Turgenevian atmosphere of tragic necessity. The story of the serf innkeeper, undone by the faithlessness of his wife and the selfishness of the lady to whom he belongs, is a typical Russian story of the undoing of a life, like so many other of Turgenev's stories, like *Oblomov*, like *The Golovlevs*, like the whole of Chekhov.

The Inn was followed in 1853–61 by a succession of masterpieces. They were divided by the author himself into two categories: novels and *nouvelles* (in Russian, *romany* and *povesti*). The difference between the two forms in the case of Turgenev is not so much one of size or scope as that the novels aim at social significance and at the statement of social problems while the *nouvelles* are pure and simple stories of emotional incident, free from civic preoccupations. Each novel includes a narrative kernel similar in subject and bulk to that of a *nouvelle*, but it is expanded into an answer to some burning problem of the day. The novels of this period are *Rudin* (1855), *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (1858), *On the Eve* (1860), and *Fathers and Sons* (1861); the *nouvelles*, *Two Friends* (1853), *A Quiet Backwater* (1854), *A Correspondence*, (1855), *Yakov Pasynkov* (1855), *Faust* (1855), *Asya* (1857), and *First Love* (1860). It will be noticed that the civic novels belong chiefly to the age of reform (1856–61), while the purely private *nouvelles* predominate in the reactionary years that precede it. But even "on the eve" of the Emancipation Turgenev could be sufficiently detached from civic issues to write the perfectly uncivic *First Love*.

The novels of Turgenev are, thus, those of his stories in

which he, voluntarily, submitted to the obligation of writing works of social significance. This significance is arrived at in the first place by the nature of the characters, who are made to be representative of phases successively traversed by the Russian intellectual. Rudin is the progressive idealist of the forties; Lavretsky, the more Slavophil idealist of the same generation; Elena, in *On the Eve,* personifies the vaguely generous and active fermentation of the generation immediately preceding the reforms; Bazarov, the militant materialism of the generation of 1860. Secondly, the social significance is served by the insertion of numerous *conversations* between the characters on topics of current interest (Slavophilism and Westernism, the ability of the educated Russian to act, the place in life of art and science, etc.). These conversations are what especially distinguished Turgenev's *novels* from his *nouvelles.* They have little relation to the action, and not always much more to the character of the representative hero. They were what the civic critics seized upon for comment, but they are certainly the least permanent and most dating part of the novels. They are not always creatively woven into the texture of the story. In most novels there occur characters who are introduced with no other motive but to do the talking (Pigasov in *Rudin,* Shubin in *On the Eve*) and whom one would have rather wished away. But the central, representative characters, the heroes, are in most cases not only representative, but alive. Rudin, the first in date, is almost the best. He is one of the masterpieces of nineteenth-century character-drawing. Turgenev shows him from *the outside:* his conduct, his speech, the impression he produces on others, not his inner life. An eminent French novelist (who is old-fashioned enough still to prefer Turgenev to Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Chekhov) recently pointed out to me the wonderfully delicate mastery with which the impression produced by Rudin on the other characters and on the reader is made gradually to change from the first appearance in the glamour of superiority to the bankruptcy of his pusillanimous breach with Natalia, then to the gloomy glimpse of the undone and degenerate man, and to the redeeming flash of his heroic and ineffective death on the barri-

cades of the Faubourg St. Antoine. The French writer thought this delicate change of attitude unique in fiction. Had he known more Russian he would have realized that Turgenev had merely been a highly intelligent and creative pupil of Pushkin's. Like Pushkin in *Evgeni Onegin* Turgenev does not analyse and dissect his heroes, as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky would have done; he does not uncover their souls; he only conveys their atmosphere, partly by showing how they are reflected in others, partly by an exceedingly delicate and thinly woven aura of suggestive accompaniment—a method that at once betrays its origin in a *poetic* novel. Where Turgenev attempts to show us the *inner* life of his heroes by other methods he always fails—the description of Elena's feelings for Insarov in *On the Eve* is distinctly painful reading. Turgenev had to use all the power of self-criticism and self-restraint to avoid the pitfall of false poetry and false beauty.

Still the characters, constructed though they are by means of suggestion, not dissection, are the vivifying principle of Turgenev's stories. Like most Russian novelists he makes character predominate over plot, and it is the characters that we remember. The population of Turgenev's novels (apart from the peasant stories) may be classified under several heads. First comes the division into the Philistines and the elect. The Philistines are the direct descendants of Gogol's characters—heroes of *poshlost*, self-satisfied inferiority. Of course there is not a trace in them of Gogol's exuberant and grotesque caricature; the irony of Turgenev is fine, delicate, unobtrusive, hardly at all aided by any obvious comical devices. On the other side are the elect, the men and women with a sense of values, superior to those of vegetable enjoyment and social position. The men, again, are very different from the women. The fair sex comes out distinctly more advantageously from the hands of Turgenev. The strong, pure, passionate, and virtuous woman, opposed to the weak, potentially generous, but ineffective and ultimately shallow man was introduced into Russian literature by Pushkin, and recurs again and again in the work of the realists, but nowhere more insistently than in Turgenev's. His heroines are famous all the world over and have

done much to spread a high reputation of Russian womanhood. As I have said, they are all implicitly contained in Pushkin's Tatiana, which does not in any way detract from the merits of their author. Such creations as Masha (*A Quiet Backwater*), Natalia (*Rudin*), Asya, and Liza (*A Nest of Gentlefolk*) are among the greatest glories not only of Russian but of all fiction. Moral force and courage is the main keynote to Turgenev's heroine—the *power* to sacrifice all worldly considerations to passion (Natalia) or all happiness to duty (Liza). But what goes home to the general reader in these women is not so much the height of their moral beauty, as the extraordinary *poetical* beauty woven round them by the delicate and perfect art of their begetter. Turgenev reaches his highest perfection in this, his own and unique art, not so much in the most famous novels (*Rudin* and *A Nest of Gentlefolk*) as in two of the shorter stories, *A Quiet Backwater* and *First Love.* In the first the purely Turgenevian, tragic, poetic, and rural atmosphere reaches its maximum of concentration, and the richness of suggestion that conditions the characters surpasses all he ever wrote. It transcends mere fiction and rises into poetry, not by the beauty of the single words and parts, but by sheer force of suggestion and saturated significance. *First Love* stands somewhat apart from the rest of Turgenev's work. Its atmosphere is cooler and clearer, more reminiscent of the rarefied air of Lermontov. The heroes, Zinaida, and the narrator's father (who is traditionally supposed to portray the author's own father) are more *animal* and vital than Turgenev usually allows his heroes to be. Their passions are tense and clear-cut, free from vagueness and idealistic haze, selfish, but with a selfishness that is redeemed by self-justifying vitality. Unique in the whole of his work, *First Love* is the least relaxing of Turgenev's stories. But, characteristically, the story is told from the point of view of the boy admirer of Zinaida and of his pangs of adolescent jealousy for his rival and his father.

At the height of his popularity, in 1860, Turgenev wrote a famous essay (delivered originally as an address in a literary society) on *Hamlet and Don Quixote.* He considered these

two characters as the two prototypes of the elect intellectual portion of mankind, which was divided into self-conscious, introspective (*grübelnd*), and consequently ineffective, Hamlets, and enthusiastic, single-minded, courageous at the risk of seeming ridiculous, Quixotes. He himself and the great majority of his heroes were Hamlets. But he had always wanted to create Quixotes, whose freedom from reflection and questioning would make them efficient, while their possession of higher values would raise them above the Philistines. The most memorable of Turgenev's early attempts at the purely Quixotic character was Yakov Pasynkov, in the story of that name. In the later forties the critics, who had taken note of the consistent inefficiency of Turgenev's heroes, clamoured for him to produce a more active and effective hero. This he attempted in *On the Eve*. But the attempt was a failure. He made his hero a Bulgarian patriot, Insarov. But he failed to breathe into him the spirit of life. Insarov is merely a strong-silent puppet, at times almost ludicrous. In conjunction with the stilted and vapid Elena, Insarov makes *On the Eve* distinctly the worst of all Turgenev's mature work.

The best of the novels and ultimately the most important of Turgenev's works is *Fathers and Sons*, one of the greatest novels of the nineteenth century. Here Turgenev triumphantly solved two tasks that he had been attempting to solve: to create a living masculine character not based on introspection, and to overcome the contradiction between the imaginative and the social theme. *Fathers and Sons* is Turgenev's only novel where the social problem is distilled without residue into art, and leaves no bits of undigested journalism sticking out. Here the delicate and poetic narrative art of Turgenev reaches its perfection, and Bazarov is the only one of Turgenev's men who is worthy to stand by the side of his women. But nowhere perhaps does the essential debility and femininess of his genius come out more clearly than in this, the best of his novels. Bazarov is a strong man, but he is painted with admiration and wonder by one to whom a strong man is something abnormal. Turgenev was incapable of making his hero triumph, and to spare him the inadequate treatment that would

have been his lot in the case of success he lets him die, not from any natural development of the nature of the subject, but by the blind decree of fate. For fate, blind chance, crass casualty, presides over Turgenev's universe as it does over Hardy's, but Turgenev's people submit to it with passive resignation. Even the heroic Bazarov dies as resigned as a flower in the field, with silent courage, but without protest.

It would be wrong to affirm that after *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev's genius began to decline, but at any rate it ceased to grow. What was more important for his contemporaries, he lost touch with Russian life and thus ceased to count as a *contemporary* writer, though he remained a permanent classic. His attempts again to tackle the problems of the day in *Smoke* (1867) and in *Virgin Soil* (1876) only emphasized his loss of touch with the new age. *Smoke* is the worst constructed of his novels: it contains a beautiful love-story, which is interrupted and interlarded with conversations that have no relation to its characters, and are just dialogued journalism on the thesis that all intellectual and educated Russia was nothing but smoke. *Virgin Soil* is a complete failure, and was immediately recognized as such. Though it contains much that is in the best manner of Turgenev (the characters of the bureaucratic-aristocratic Sipyagin family are among his best satirical drawings), the whole novel is disqualified by an entirely uninformed and necessarily false conception of what he was writing about. His presentation of the revolutionaries of the seventies is like an account of a foreign country by one who had never seen it.

But while Turgenev had lost the power of writing for the times, he had not lost the genius of creating those wonderful love-stories which are his most personal contribution to the world's literature. *Smoke* pruned of its conversations is a beautiful *nouvelle*, comparable to the best he wrote in the fifties, and so is *The Torrents of Spring* (1871). Both are on the same subject: a young man loves a pure and sweet young girl, but forsakes her for a mature and lascivious woman of thirty, who is loved by many and for whom he is the plaything of a fleeting passion. The characters of Irina, the older woman

in *Smoke*, and of Gemma, the Italian girl in *The Torrents of Spring*, are among the most beautiful in the whole of his gallery. *The Torrents of Spring* is given a retrospective setting, and in most of the other stories of this last period the scene is set in the old times of pre-Reform Russia. Some of these stories are purely objective little tragedies (one of the best is *A Lear of the Steppes*, 1870); others are non-narrative fragments from reminiscences, partly continuing the manner and theme of *A Sportsman's Sketches*. There are also the purely biographical reminiscences, including interesting accounts of the author's acquaintance with Pushkin and Belinsky, and the remarkable account of *The Execution of Troppmann* (1870), which in its fascinated objectivity is one of the most terrible descriptions ever made of an execution.

There had always been in Turgenev a poetic or romantic vein, as opposed to the prevailing realistic atmosphere of his principal work. His attitude to nature had always been lyrical and he had always had a lurking desire to transcend the limits imposed on the Russian novelist by the dogma of realism. The lyrical element is never far to look for in Turgenev. Not only did he begin his career as a lyrical poet and end it with his *Poems in Prose*, but even in his most realistic and civic novels the construction and atmosphere is mainly lyrical. *A Sportsman's Sketches* includes many purely lyrical pages of natural description, and to the period of his highest maturity belongs that remarkable piece *A Tour in the Forest* (1857), where for the first time Turgenev's conception of indifferent and eternal nature opposed to transient man found expression in a sober and simple prose that attains poetry by the simplest means of unaided suggestion. His last period begins with the purely lyrical prose-poem *Enough* and culminates in the *Poems in Prose*. At the same time the fantastic element asserts itself. In some stories (*The Dog, Knock! Knock! Knock!, The Story of Father Alexis*) it appears only in the form of a suggestion of mysterious presences in an ordinary realistic setting. The most important of these stories is his last, *Clara Milich* (1882), written under the influence of spiritualistic readings and musings. It is as good as most of his stories of purely human love,

but the mysterious element is somewhat difficult to appreciate today quite whole-heartedly. It has all the inevitable flatness of Victorian spiritualism. In a few stories Turgenev freed himself from the conventions of realistic form and wrote such things as the purely visionary *Phantoms* (1864), and *The Song of Triumphant Love* (1881), written in the style of an Italian *novella* of the sixteenth century. There can be no greater contrast than between these and such stories of Dostoyevsky as *The Double* or *Mr. Prokharchin.* Dostoyevsky, with the material of sordid reality, succeeds in building fabrics of weird fantasy. Turgenev, in spite of all the paraphernalia introduced (moonlight, disembodied spirits, and visions of past ages), never succeeded in freeing himself from the second-rate atmosphere of the medium's consulting-room. *The Song of Triumphant Love* shows up his limitation of another kind—the inadequacy of his language for treating subjects of insufficient reality. The moment he is torn away from the familiar nineteenth-century soil, his language becomes all wrong. This limitation Turgenev shared with all his contemporaries (except Tolstoy and Leskov): they had not a sufficient feeling of words, of language as language (as Pushkin and Gogol had had), to make it serve them in unfamiliar fields. Words for them were only signs of familiar things and familiar feelings. Language had entered with them on a strictly limited engagement—it would serve only in so far as it had not to leave the everyday realities of the nineteenth century.

The same stylistic limitation is apparent in Turgenev's last and most purely lyrical work, *Poems in Prose* (1879–83). (Turgenev originally entitled them *Senilia;* the present title was given them with the author's silent approval by the editor of the *Messenger of Europe,* where they first appeared.) They are a series of short, prose fragments, most of them gathered round some more or less narrative kernel. They are comparable in construction to the objectivated lyrics of the French Parnassians, who used visual symbols to express their subjective experience. Sometimes they verge on the fable and the apologue. In these "poems" is to be found the final and most

hopeless expression of Turgenev's agnostic pessimism, of his awe of unresponsive nature and necessity, and of his pitying contempt for human futility. The best of the "poems" are those where these feelings are given an ironic garb. The more purely poetical ones have suffered from time, and date too distinctly from about 1880, a date that can hardly add beauty to anything connected with it. The one that closes the series, *The Russian Language*, has suffered particularly—not from time only, but from excessive handling. It displays in a condensed form all the weakness and ineffectiveness of Turgenev's style when it was divorced from concrete and familiar *things*. The art of eloquence had been lost.

Turgenev was the first Russian writer to charm the Western reader. There are still retarded Victorians who consider him the only Russian writer who is not disgusting. But for most lovers of Russian he has been replaced by spicier food. Turgenev was very nineteenth century, perhaps the most representative man of its latter part, whether in Russia or west of it. He was a Victorian, a man of compromise, more Victorian than any one of his Russian contemporaries. This made him so acceptable to Europe, and this has now made him lose so much of his reputation there. Turgenev struck the West at first as something new, something typically Russian. But it is hardly necessary to insist to-day on the fact that he is not in any sense representative of Russia as a whole. He was only representative of his class—the idealistically educated middle gentry, tending already to become a non-class intelligentsia—and of his generation, which failed to gain real touch with Russian realities,* which failed to find itself a place in life and, ineffective in the sphere of action, produced one of the most beautiful literary growths of the nineteenth century. In his day Turgenev was regarded as a leader of opinion on social problems; now this seems strange and unintelligible. Long since, the issues that he fought out have ceased to be of any actual interest. Unlike Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, unlike

* What Turgenev was in touch with were not the raw realities of Russian life, but only their reflection in the minds of his generation of intellectuals.

Griboyedov, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol, unlike Chaadayev, Grigoriev, and Herzen, Turgenev is no longer a teacher or even a ferment. His work has become pure art—and perhaps it has won more from this transformation than it has lost. It has taken a permanent place in the Russian tradition, a place that stands above the changes of taste or the revolutions of time. We do not seek for wisdom or guidance in it, but it is impossible to imagine a time when *The Singers*, *A Backwater*, *First Love* or *Fathers and Sons* will cease to be among the most cherished of joys to Russian readers.

6. THE SENTIMENTAL PHILANTHROPISTS

Turgenev in *A Sportsman's Sketches* was not the first of the realists to take his subjects from peasant life. He had been preceded by Dmitri Vasilievich Grigoróvich (1822–1899), whose stories of peasant life, *The Village* and *Anton Goremyka*, published respectively in 1846 and in 1847, were among the principal events of those eventful two years. They produced a strong impression on the partisans of the new literature by a deliberate effort to paint peasant life from inside, not as it might be seen by an external observer, but from the point of view of the characters themselves. But the intention was better than the execution, and the stories can hardly be regarded as satisfactory or intrinsically significant. After his first success Grigorovich continued writing ambitiously planned stories and novels, but before long it became evident that he was no rival to Turgenev or Goncharov. After 1860 he wrote little and only quite unpretending magazine-stories. Grigorovich has a more important place in literary biography than in literature, for it was he who, in 1845, introduced Dostoyevsky to Nekrasov and Belinsky, and more than forty years later played a principal part in the discovery of Chekhov.

After *The Village* and *A Sportsman's Sketches* the sentimental, "philanthropic" presentation of peasant life became one of the set subjects of the novelists of the realistic school. Most of them sacrificed to it, more or less. Only one writer made a name on it. This was Marie Alexandrovna Márko-

vich, née Velinsky (1834–1907), who wrote under the name of Marko-Vovchok. She belongs to Ukrainian more than to Russian literature. Herself a Great-Russian by birth, she married the Ukrainian nationalist Afanasi Markovich and acquired the idiom to such perfection that she is recognized as an Ukrainian classic and her prose as the best in that language. Her first book of stories of peasant life appeared in 1858 in Ukrainian; it was received with enthusiasm and had the honour of a Russian translation by Turgenev. Her second book (1859) appeared in Russian. The tales of "Marko-Vovchok" are distinct in style and treatment from the common run of the realistic novel. Her stories are folk-tales, with a narrative development free from irrelevent description and psychology, with clear-cut characters, which leave no doubt as to their moral value, and a good deal of healthy and orthodox melodrama. The peasants are all painted white; their oppressors, the landlords, black. In spite of this somewhat naïve monochromy the narrative merit of her stories is so great that they quite justify the enthusiasm of her first critics and her place in the Ukrainian tradition. Her language, both in Russian and in Ukrainian, is beautifully flexible and expressive, if not quite free from a certain dulcet sentimentality.

7. PISEMSKY

Alexey Theofilaktovich Písemsky was born in 1820, in the province of Kostroma. His family were of noble origin, but very poor. His grandfather lived the life of a peasant, walked behind the plough, and remained illiterate. The writer's father began life as a private soldier, rose to the rank of major, and married a lady of a more educated family. Thus Pisemsky, though a noble, was not a typical squire, and may in many ways be regarded as a plebeian. At twenty he went to the University of Moscow. He was influenced by its atmosphere, became an admirer of George Sand and a devotee of the theatre, but was not infected by the prevalent metaphysical and social idealism. A sort of sceptical common sense remained for ever the foundation of his mentality, coupled with an intense Rus-

sian feeling, which took no interest in foreign things, but neither idealized Russia and the Russians nor shared the nationalist idealism of the Slavophils. After taking his degree he entered the Civil Service and with several intervals remained most of his life a Civil Servant. Before taking to literature he had hoped to become an actor and had shown great ability in this direction. He always retained a reputation as the best *reader* of his works among the men of letters of his time. In 1847 he presented to the Censorship his novel *Boyarshchina*, but it was not passed, the censor finding too gloomy the picture it presented of Russian life. So the first novel by Pisemsky to appear was *The Muff* (*Tyufyak*, 1850). Soon after its publication Pisemsky became a member of the so-called "young editorial staff of the *Moskvityanin*," a group of highly gifted young men (the leaders were Ostrovsky and Grigoriev). They were inspired by a love of Russia that was more democratic and less dogmatic than Slavophilism. Pisemsky was attracted by their enthusiasm for originality and raciness. But his independence and distrust of all the theories and ideas prevented him from identifying himself with them altogether. Their spirit is easily recognized in the popular stories he wrote in the early fifties. Throughout the fifties Pisemsky continued producing masterpieces that met with increasing recognition. He attained the height of his popularity after the publication of the novel *A Thousand Souls* (1858) and the realistic tragedy *A Hard Lot* (1859). But in spite of his success he was out of tune with the times: he lacked the reforming zeal, the enthusiasm for rational progress, the faith in social theories, that inspired the Russia of his day. In 1859 he rashly ventured into journalism, and when, after 1861, the atmosphere changed, and violent party-feeling took the place of the unanimous enthusiasm of the preceding years, Pisemsky was one of the first to suffer. He conducted his review in a spirit of scepticism and of disbelief in progress and in the young generation. Some rather harmless sceptical remarks on Sunday schools (one of the pet toys of the time) were enough to provoke a storm of indignation that forced Pisemsky to close his review, to retire to Moscow, and to seek readmission to the Civil Service. In 1863 he pub-

lished a new novel, *Troubled Seas*, which contained a satirical presentation of the young generation. This naturally increased the hostility of the radicals. Pisemsky became a profoundly embittered man. He began to loathe not only the radicals, but everything around him. In particular he was moved to wrath by the orgy of unbridled money-making that was such a feature of the years following the Emancipation. His gloom was aggravated by the suicide of his son. He became a victim to hypochondria, which poisoned his last years. He courageously fought against it, forcing himself to write a certain number of hours each day, but his talent steadily declined, and his popularity still more. When he died, in 1881, he had been for some time no longer regarded as one of the living forces of literature.

Pisemsky is different in many ways from his contemporaries. Most of the essential features I have spoken of as common to the Russian realists are absent from his work. To begin with, he is free from all idealism, and this in two senses—he has no use for ideas and theories, and he does not take an optimistic view of mankind. In the painting of human baseness, meanness, and smallness he has no rivals and he is the true successor of Gogol. But he is infinitely more objective than either Gogol or any of the realists, and this again in two senses. He painted life as he saw it without breaking it to any preconceived idea. On the other hand the people who inhabit his stories are not subjective creations, ultimately based on the exteriorization of personal experience, like Gogol's and like those of most of the realists, but really *other* people, seen with the eyes and understood by the sense of kind. Another feature of Pisemsky is the predominance in his work of outline over atmosphere. His people do not move about in a mellow autumnal haze like Turgenev's, but stand out in the fierce glare of sunlight. The discreteness as opposed to the continuity of things is what his vision reveals. Closely connected with this feature is a far greater element of narrative interest than is usual in Russian fiction. There is real and rapid action in Pisemsky's stories. They are much more *interesting* than those of any other Russian realist except Leskov.

Like others among the Russian realists Pisemsky is gloomy rather than otherwise, but again in a different way—his gloom is not, like Turgenev's, a hopeless surrender to the mysterious forces of the universe, but a hearty and virile disgust at the vileness of the majority of mankind, and at the futility in particular of the Russian educated classes. All these characteristics, together with his somewhat cynical attitude to life, make Pisemsky unlike the main current of Russian realism, and much more like the French naturalists. He has points in common with Balzac and is anticipatory of Zola and of Maupassant. But the Russian characteristics of Russian realism which we do not find in Pisemsky are not so much typical of the Russian mind as of a very particular phase of it—the mind of the idealist of the forties. Pisemsky, who kept himself uncontaminated by idealism, was in his own time regarded as much more characteristically Russian than his more cultured contemporaries. And this is true, Pisemsky was in much closer touch with Russian life, in particular with the life of the uneducated middle and lower classes, than were the genteeler novelists. He was, together with Ostrovsky, and before Leskov, the first to open that wonderful gallery of Russian characters of *non-noble* birth which is one of the greatest things in Russian literature yet to be discovered by the West. Pisemsky's great narrative gift and exceptionally strong grip on reality make him one of the best Russian novelists, and if this is not sufficiently realized, the fact is due (apart from considerations of fashion) to his regrettable lack of culture. It was lack of culture that made Pisemsky too weak to hold out against the ravages of age, and permitted him to degenerate so sadly in his later work. It was lack of culture also that made him so unsatisfactory a stylist, for he had a command of language (his peasant dialogue is infinitely superior to anything before of its kind), but he was undone by his lack of respect for the individual word—which is after all the beginning and end of the craft of letters. It is chiefly for this reason that he has to be placed below Leskov.

Pisemsky's first novel, *Boyarshchina* (first published in 1858, but written in 1845), already possessed most of his best quali-

ties. It has even more narrative tensity than his later stories, and a substantial element of melodrama, which is absent from his maturer work, but reappears in the dramas he wrote in the sixties. The heroine is, unlike his later heroines, idealized and as helplessly pure and ideal as those of Zinaida R-va. The subject also recalls the stories of that authoress—it is the contrast between the big-hearted, passionate, courageous woman and the small man, who is ready to love her as long as it incurs no responsibility on his side, but is not man enough to face the tragic realities of passion. The painting of provincial society is powerfully scornful and Pisemsky displays already an art in which he was to excel—the art of relating with wonderfully vivid convincingness the growth and spread of scandal and calumny. Here also appears the first of these strong men of the people, the peasant squire Saveliy, said to be a reminiscence of the writer's father.

His second novel (the first one published), *The Muff* (*Tyufyak*), is free from the melodramatic and idealistic residue of *Boyarshchina*. It is a distinctly unpleasant story. It has no sympathetic characters and, at the same time, no villains. All are equally mean and small, but no one is to blame, except everyone's insincerity in pretending to be something better than he really is. The story of the unhappy marriage of two equally mediocre and despicable people is told with extraordinary power, which in spite of the triviality of the souls involved rises to the level of tragedy. *The Muff* was followed by a succession of stories, of which I will mention the purely humorous and ironical *A Marriage for Love* (1851), where he uncrowns the would-be hero, the small man in the romantic mask, and the would-be heroine, the pleasure-and-husband-seeking young girl in the mask of Gretchen; and *Is She to Blame?* (1855), where once again he unfolds with relentless realism the sad fate of the pure woman in a *milieu* where baseness and smallness are the common standard, and her helplessness before calumny and scandal.

In the same years Pisemsky wrote his wonderful *Sketches of Peasant Life*, which introduced an entirely new attitude to the people's life, poles away from the superior compassion of

Grigorovich and Turgenev. The peasant (it must be remembered that the peasants of Pisemsky's native province are not agriculturists, but traders and craftsmen, who make their money in the towns) is represented not as a poor creature to be sympathized with for his humanity and pitied for his sufferings, but as a strong and shrewd man, the superior in moral strength and will-power of his social superior, a man untainted by the vulgarity of provincial gentility, unpoisoned by the weakness of emasculated feelings, who knows what he wants, can yield to his passions, and can control them. The greatest of Pisemsky's popular creations is the drama *A Hard Lot*, but the *Sketches of Peasant Life* contain also such masterpieces of character drawing, vigorous narrative, and racy Russian as *The Petersburgher* (*Pitershchik*) and *The Carpenters* (*Plotnichya Artel*).

A Thousand Souls (1858) was Pisemsky's most ambitious work. It is the story of Kalinovich, a young man of talent and promise, of a certain nobility of mind and boundless ambition. His one desire is to *parvenir*, to become somebody. He fails in literature, but he succeeds in marrying an heiress (the owner of "a thousand souls") with powerful family connexions, but with a doubtful past. Thanks to her connexions, and especially to her lover and cousin, Prince Ivan, Kalinovich reaches a degree of importance in the official world, where he feels himself independent enough to get rid of his stepping-stones. He casts aside his wife. He is made a provincial governor and shows himself a fierce champion of honesty and integrity. He prosecutes the dishonest and powerful Prince Ivan, but in his zeal to undo his enemy goes beyond the limits of legality and has to leave the service. The story is as unsweetened and ruthless in its unidealized view of mankind as any story of Pisemsky's, but its gloom and squalor are redeemed by the person of Kalinovich's first fiancée, and later mistress, Nastya, in her courageous womanhood one of the most charming figures in Russian fiction.

Troubled Seas, which sealed Pisemsky's quarrel with the radicals, is not as good as *A Thousand Souls*. The first three parts are quite on his best level—the narrative rapid and vigorous,

and the heroine, Sophie Linyova, one of his greatest creations of character, a sort of Russian Becky Sharp with a soul. Pisemsky has succeeded in conveying with great power both her profoundly degraded viciousness and her pathetic, almost childish charm. The last three parts of the novel are much less satisfactory. They are a scurrilous and unfair satire on the young generation, too profoundly distorted by the personal embitterment of the author.

The novels he wrote after that date are on a still lower level. Though he always retained his power of narrative development, it glided down into the cheaply melodramatic. His characters lose their vitality, his Russian becomes intolerable journalese, and his values are hopelessly distorted by bitterness and hypochondria. More interesting than the others for their historical subject-matter, but not for their imaginative treatment, are *Men of the Forties* (1869) and *The Masons* (1880).*

8. NOVELISTS OF PROVINCIAL CHARACTER

Pisemsky's stories of popular life were part of a movement. Other young writers belonging to the "young staff of the *Moskvityanin*" cultivated what we may call the literature of popular *character*, as opposed to the "philanthropic" peasant fiction of the westernizers. They approached the lower and uneducated classes of Russian society not as objects of pity, but as the purest and finest expression of Russian national originality, the one thing they were in love with. With the exception of Pisemsky and of Ostrovsky none of the writers of this school are of the first rank, and all are more or less forgotten; but the memory of another member of the staff, Ivan Fedorovich Gorbunóv (1831–1895), is still green. He won a national reputation as a story-teller and anecdotist. Those who remember him testify to the wonderful effect his stories produced. He was an unsurpassed master of intonation and expression. Even in their written form his short, dialogued scenes of popular life in the street and on the high road are masterpieces of inimitably racy humour. Besides

* For Pisemsky's dramatic work see chapter VII, 14.

these dialogues Gorbunov created the extraordinary personality of General Dityatin, an old die-hard general, disgusted by the reforms of Alexander II and proud of having had his brains taken out of him after an operation. Gorbunov used to make dinner speeches in the person of General Dityatin. The one delivered at a banquet in honour of Turgenev is particularly good.

After the general awakening of 1856 numerous writers devoted themselves to the study of the various forms of the people's life. The literature produced by the ethnographers takes every intermediate form from pure fiction to pure journalistic or scientific description.

More ambitious is the work of Pavel Ivanovich Mélnikov (1819–1883), who wrote under the name of Andrey Pechérsky. His principal works, describing the life of the Old Believers * in the backwoods beyond the middle Volga (opposite Nizhni-Novgorod), *In the Woods* and *On the Hills*, appeared in the seventies. They are not really first-class literature and are disfigured by a meretricious pseudo-poetical style, imitative of folk-lore. But the interest of the *milieu* described and the author's knowledge of it are so great that, quite apart from the imaginative value of the books, they make absorbingly interesting reading. The life of that stubborn and conservative community of Old Believers is strikingly unlike the life of the genteel intelligentsia. Rising on a foundation of imperfectly subdued, exuberant, and lusty heathenism and held in check by the powerful discipline of ascetic and fanatical religion, it offers a powerfully picturesque picture. Nor can Melnikov be denied the gift of character drawing. The abbess, Mother Manetha, and her illegitimate daughter Flenushka—two stages of the same type—the mother expiating in a proud and haughty asceticism the carnal sins of her youth; the daughter in the full spring of her vital forces, afterwards (in the second novel) herself becoming a tyrannical and ascetic abbess—are among the permanent achievements of the Russian novel.

Here is probably the best place to introduce Nadezhda

* See chapter I, 10.

Stepanovna Sokhánsky (1825–1884), who wrote under the name of Kokhanóvskaya. Though she took the subject-matter of her stories from the life of the provincial gentry, she resembles the novelists of popular character rather than the genteel problem-novelists, for what she brings out are the peculiarities and the old-fashioned originality of the class she describes, the small, uneducated squires of her native province of Kharkov. She was herself the daughter of such a squire. She was educated in a young ladies' public school where she came into contact with a higher culture, but on returning home she found that this culture was of no use in the life she had been destined to. She was the Cinderella of her family, and had to suppress all her higher aspirations and ambitions. She canalized them into her writings. She never became embittered with her life, and her work is inspired by a love for the simple and backwater provincial life of her class of people, and a devotion to the Slavophil ideals of family unity and paternal authority. Her stories of contemporary life may be regarded as a continuation of the tradition of Gogol's *Old-World Landowners*. In the use of language, racy, picturesque, and varied, she is also a more worthy disciple of the great novelist than most of her contemporaries. Her stories (published between 1848 and 1864) are a delightful mixture of humour and sentimentality, only occasionally spoilt by an excess of the latter ingredient. Her characters are essentially similar to those of Pisemsky, but the treatment is different. She brings out that which is essentially noble and lovable even in the most vegetable and least spiritual forms of humanity. This gives her stories a peculiar warmth and homely beauty. Her satire, when there is any, is always light and good-natured, and her humour sympathetic. Better even than her stories of contemporary manners are those which revive the more spacious life of the great provincial squires of the age of Catherine. Her pictures of that life need not fear comparison with Aksakov's *Family Chronicle*. They are in a different key—more romantic—and the characters, drawn, like Aksakov's, bigger than nature, are heroic in a different way—heroes of romance rather than of epic.

CHAPTER VII

THE AGE OF REALISM: JOURNALISTS, POETS, AND PLAYWRIGHTS

1. CRITICISM AFTER BELINSKY

WHEN, in 1846, Belinsky left Kraevsky's review for Nekrasov's *Sovremennik*, his part of chief critic in the former was taken by a young man of twenty-three of quite unusual promise, Valerian Nikolayevich Máykov (1823–1847). He came of a gifted family (his brother was the poet Apollon Maykov) and early distinguished himself by exceptional talents. He possessed an amount of common sense, a breadth of understanding, and a sense of literary values that it would be in vain to look for in any other Russian critic of the intelligentsia age. His early death, in 1847, was a real calamity: like Venevitinov before him and Pomyalovsky after him he was one of those who, had they been granted a longer life, might have turned the course of Russian civilization into more creative and less Chekhovian ways. Maykov was a civic critic and a socialist. But he *was* a critic, one of the small number of genuine critics in Russian literature. For actual literary facts he had an extraordinarily keen insight. His criticism of Dostoyevsky's early work can even now be accepted almost without qualifications, and he was the first to give public appreciation to the poetry of Tyutchev.

After the death of Maykov and of Belinsky the critical leadership of the westernizing press passed to the right-wing westernizers, the non-civic, æsthetic critics for whom Art was an ultimate expression of ideas that were above the problems of today, and a matter of enjoyment, not of values.

The most notable were Alexander Vasilievich Druzhinin (1824–1864), who has already been mentioned as the author of

the problem novel *Polinka Sachs*, and Pavel Vasilievich Annenkov (1813–1887). Annenkov was the secretary of Gogol when the great novelist was writing *Dead Souls* and afterwards became the intimate friend of Turgenev. In 1853–6 the two together and Nekrasov formed a sort of triumvirate which practically controlled Russian (at least Petersburg) literature. Turgenev regarded Annenkov as the most competent man to seek literary advice from and always gave him his works to read before giving them their final touches.

Annenkov is most widely known as the editor and biographer of Pushkin. His book on *Pushkin in the Reign of Alexander I* (1875) is one of the most remarkable books of the kind. The picture he gives of the society that produced and surrounded Pushkin up to his twenty-fifth year is a masterpiece of social history. And though his condescending tone towards what he considered a backward age is irritating, the way he sees and singles out relevant facts, and the pregnancy of his painting, make the book indispensable to any student of Russian civilization, besides being excellent reading. Equally shrewd and suggestive are his numerous memoirs and biographical sketches of his contemporaries. Together they form a richly suggestive picture of those crucial years in the life of Russian intellectual mentality.

2. APOLLON GRIGORIEV

Apollon Alexandrovich Grigóriev was born in 1822 in Moscow, in the heart of the quarter inhabited by the merchants—a part of the town where the superficial veneer of international and genteel civilization was scarcely apparent and where Russian character survived and throve in more or less unfettered forms.

In due course Grigoriev went to the University, and there before long he was thoroughly soaked in the romantic and idealistic spirit of his age. Schiller, Byron, Lermontov, and above all the theatre, with Shakspere, and Mochalov to interpret him, became the air he breathed.

On leaving the University Grigoriev devoted himself to literature. In 1846 he published a volume of verse that met with

scant recognition. Once free from the parental home Grigoriev acquired the undisciplined and erratic ways of a romantic Bohemian. His life became a succession of passionately ideal romances, equally passionate and self-oblivious debauch, and constant money entanglements, for which his irresponsible and incalculable behaviour was usually to blame. But, whatever he did, he remained alive to the highest ideals. Nor did he lose his great working-capacity. He worked in fits and starts, but hectically and frantically, whether it was at some piece of hack work for a sweating publisher, or at a translation of a favourite work of Shakspere or Byron, or at one of his endless articles, so incoherent and so pregnant with thought.

In 1847 he came in contact with a group of gifted young men, whose centre was Ostrovsky. This had a decisive influence on Grigoriev. His new friends were united by a bubbling and boundless enthusiasm for Russian originality and for the Russian people. Under their action Grigoriev's early, vaguely generous romanticism took the form of a cult of the Russian character and Russian spirit. Ostrovsky especially produced an enormous impression by his wholeness and common sense, and at the same time by the new and purely Russian spirit of his dramatic work. Henceforward Grigoriev became the herald and prophet of Ostrovsky.

In 1851 Grigoriev contrived to persuade Pogodin to hand over to himself the editorship of the *Moskvityanin*. Grigoriev, Ostrovsky, and their friends became known as "the young staff of the *Moskvityanin*." The short-sighted miserliness of Pogodin gradually forced the best writers of the "young staff" to desert to the westernizing reviews of Petersburg. In 1856, at last, the *Moskvityanin* came to an end and Grigoriev found himself once more at large. His connexion with the "young staff" had only strengthened in him his undisciplined Bohemianism. Wine and song were one of the principal occupations of the company, and gipsy choruses one of the forms of native art they particularly patronized. But while men like Ostrovsky were robust enough physically and morally to stand the wildest excesses, Grigoriev's more delicate and unbalanced frame was seriously shattered by this wild living, and still more by the lack

of discipline it encouraged. After the failure of the *Moskvityanin* Grigoriev once more moved to Petersburg in search of employment. But as a journalist he was unacceptable to the majority of editors, who disapproved of his enthusiastic nationalism. He fell on evil times and had to look out for non-literary employment. At one time he got an excellent situation as tutor to a young aristocrat abroad, but his connexion with the family ended in one of his most notorious scandals. Equally unsuccessful was his venture as a schoolmaster in Orenburg, whence after a year's work he suddenly disappeared without notice. In 1861 he came in touch with the Dostoyevsky brothers and Strakhov, and took part in their publication *Vremya*. He found in them a kindred spirit and a sympathetic understanding, but he was too far gone to be redeemed from his irregular life. A great part of his last years was spent in a debtor's prison. In 1864, when the *Vremya* (suppressed in 1863) was revived as the *Epoch*, Grigoriev was invited by the Dostoyevskys to be chief critic. In the few months left him Grigoriev wrote what is probably his most significant prose work, *My Literary and Moral Wanderings* and *Paradoxes of Organic Criticism*. But his days were numbered. In the summer of 1864 he found himself once more in a debtor's prison. He was released owing to the generosity of a friend, and died on the next day after his release.

Grigoriev liked to call himself the last of the romanticists, and, whether he was the last of that race or not, he is no doubt the most complete incarnation of the romantic spirit in Russian literature. All the main characteristics of romanticism are present in him: passionate aspirations towards the ideal and hopeless inability to realize it; a more than ordinary sensitiveness and surrender to the lure of poetry; extreme subjectiveness in all his writings; complete irresponsibility of behaviour, coupled with a keen and highly developed sense of values—hence a constant oscillation between a high confidence in his absolute and ideal self, and extreme disgust at its actual behaviour. Even Grigoriev's nationalism, his idea of the organic truth of the Russian people, linked in his mind with the highest

religious, transcending all moral, values, is a characteristically romantic feature.

The personality of Grigoriev is revealed best of all in his remarkable letters, one of the most fascinating correspondences in the language. For sincerity, passion, and variety of emotional colouring they have few equals.

As a poet he is typical of the post-Lermontov period, when all technical effort was practically discarded, and poetry relied on inspiration pure and simple. Grigoriev's narrative poems are unreadably diffuse. His early book of lyrics (1846) contains some remarkable lines and stanzas, remarkable chiefly for the curious way in which they anticipate the voice and accent of Blok. But his best verse belongs to the days of his carousals with the "young staff." Published some years later in second-rate newspapers, it remained uncollected till Blok's edition of 1915. The best of these poems were inspired by his intimacy with the gipsy choruses. His address to his guitar and the wonderful lyric fugue beginning *Two Guitars* can rank with the most purely and beautifully inspired lyrics in the language. The latter poem, though uneven, crude, and excessively long, is certainly a wonderful flight of lyrical genius, forestalling in a certain sense Blok's famous *The Twelve*.

Of Grigoriev's prose writings the most remarkable, as well as the most universally readable, is *My Literary and Moral Wanderings*. It may be described as a cultural autobiography. It is not the complete history of his soul, but the history of his experience as related to the cultural *milieu* that produced him and to the cultural life of the nation during his early years. The opening chapters describe the old and gloomy paternal house, the figures of his father and mother, the servants that surrounded him, all the atmosphere of the old "South Side" of Moscow. Then come his literary and intellectual wanderings at school and at the University, against a background of the whole literary and cultural life of the generation. Grigoriev was extraordinarily sensitive to the movement of history, and no one was more capable than he of reviving the smell and taste of a particular phase of time. The book is almost unique

in kind—the only other book that in any sense approaches it is Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts,* different in tone, but similar in the power of historical intuition.

As a critic Grigoriev is chiefly remembered for the theory of "organic criticism," which insisted on the necessity of art and literature's being an organic growth of the national *soil* (*pochva;* hence the name of *pochvenniki* for his followers). This *organic* quality Grigoriev found in Pushkin, for whose cult he did a great deal, and in his contemporary Ostrovsky, whose herald he prided himself on being. Grigoriev loved all that was Russian for being Russian, and apart from all other considerations. "Organic" Russianness was to him an absolute value. But he was a follower of the Slavophils in identifying what he thought to be peculiarly Russian. "Meekness" (*krotki*) was to him the characteristic of the Russian character, as opposed to the "predatory" (*khishchny*) quality of European man. The "new word" that he hoped would be uttered by Russia was the creation of "meek types"; the first indication of it he discerned in Pushkin's Belkin and in Lermontov's Maxim Maximych. He did not live to see what he might have accepted as its final expression, Dostoyevsky's *Idiot.*

But the "predatory" type incarnate in Lermontov (and his Pechorin) and above all in Byron had an unconquerable fascination for Grigoriev. In fact nothing that was romantic was alien to him, and for all his love of the classical and balanced geniuses of Pushkin and Ostrovsky his innermost sympathy went to the most exuberant of the romanticists and to the sublimest of the idealists. Byron, Victor Hugo, and Schiller were his most intimate preferences. He was also a great admirer of Carlyle, of Emerson, and of Michelet. With Michelet his affinities are particularly great. What is perhaps the most valuable part of all the critical theories of Grigoriev, his intuition of life as an organic, complex, self-conditioned unity, is strongly reminiscent of the great French historian. Of course he does not come near to Michelet as an artist of words—Grigoriev's writings are all more or less unkempt and slovenly journalism where flashes of genius and intuition are stifled by the overgrown weeds of verbosity. Only in *My Literary and*

Moral Wanderings and in *Paradoxes of Organic Criticism* does he really reach something like adequate expression. The latter was written in answer to an invitation from Dostoyevsky to give a definite statement of his *Weltanschauung.* It contains these words, the quintessence of his intuition: "Life is something mysterious and inexhaustible, an abyss that engulfs all finite reason, an unspannable ocean, the logical conclusion of the wisest brain—something even ironical, and at the same time full of love, procreating one world after another. . . ." This intuition has led contemporary critics to speak of Grigoriev as a precursor of Bergson, and there can be no doubt of the essential kinship of the Russian Bohemian with the French professor. It forms also a link with Herzen (for whom Grigoriev had a high admiration), who has also been called a Russian Bergsonian before Bergson.

3. HERZEN

Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (in Russian the name is written and pronounced Gertsen) was born in Moscow, in 1812. He was the illegitimate son of I. A. Yakovlev (who acquired a certain notoriety in the year of his son's birth by being almost the only noble to remain in Moscow during the French occupation, and by consenting to carry a message from Napoleon to Alexander I), and of a German girl. In spite of his illegitimate birth Herzen grew up in every respect as the son of a rich nobleman. He received the usual, French and unpractical, education and was much less of a *déclassé* than Turgenev or Nekrasov. Very early began his lifelong friendship with N. P. Ogarev. The two boys were strongly impressed by the Decembrist Revolt, and vowed themselves to the completion of the work of the defeated rebels. In the University (where Herzen was in the early thirties) the two friends became the centre of a circle that concentrated on political ideas and on socialism. In 1834 the members of the circle were arrested and Herzen was exiled to the provinces, not as a prisoner, but as a clerk in the Civil Service. After seven years in Vyatka he was transferred to Vladimir, whence he could easily come clandestinely to Moscow.

He went there to see his cousin Nathalie, whom he had loved from boyhood and with whom he had all those years continued a very remarkable correspondence. The family did not approve of the romance, and did not allow Nathalie to marry her cousin, but Herzen kidnapped her and they were secretly married. The romance is delightfully described in *My Past and Thoughts*. In 1840 Herzen was allowed to return to Moscow, where he immediately became a prominent figure in the intellectual life of the capital. He had a decisive influence on Belinsky, and it was from the contact of the two men that Russian westernism arose in its definite form. Herzen became its chief champion in the Moscow *salons*, where as a speaker and debater he was second only to the invincible Khomyakov. In literature he began making a name by a series of articles on progress and natural science (over the signature of Iskander) that were the first symptoms of the general turn of the Russian mind from romantic idealism to scientific positivism. In 1846–7 he also published several stories, including the novel *Whose Fault?* In 1847, after the death of his father, he became the owner of a large fortune. Not without difficulty he succeeded in obtaining a foreign passport and left Russia for Paris. From Paris he sent to Nekrasov's *Sovremennik* four remarkable *Letters from the Avenue Marigny*, which were a rather open assertion of socialist ideas in the teeth of the Censorship. Soon after Herzen's arrival in Paris there broke out the February Revolution. He greeted it enthusiastically and openly, thus destroying for himself all possibility of returning to Russia. Henceforward he identified himself with the Revolutionary movement of Europe. Expelled from France after the victory of Cavaignac, he went to Rome, and after the failure of the Roman Revolution to Switzerland, where he was naturalized a Swiss citizen, to Nice, and ultimately to England. The failure of the Revolution was a profound wound to Herzen. Under its immediate influence he wrote that series of essays and dialogues *From the Other Shore* (first published in German, as *Vom andern Ufer*), which is probably his masterpiece and his greatest claim to immortality. The depression of his spirit after the failure of the Revolution was increased by the romance of his

wife (who after all remained faithful to him) with the German Revolutionary poet Herwegh. In 1853 Herzen settled in England and there founded the first Russian free press abroad. Its first publications were (besides proclamations) *My Past and Thoughts* (first parts) and the Russian text of *From the Other Shore*. After the Crimean War, when the general awakening of Russia gave new hopes to Herzen, he turned his interest from European revolution to Russian reform. In 1857 he founded the *Bell* (*Kolokol*), a weekly paper which at once acquired an enormous influence and, though officially prohibited, poured into Russia in numerous copies. It was read by everyone, and not least by those in power. Its revelations of abuses and misgovernment often led to immediate official action in removing the most objectionable culprits. In the years 1857–61 the *Bell* was the principal political force in Russia. This was due very largely to Herzen's gift of political tact: without surrendering a tittle of his extreme socialistic and federalistic theories, in practice he was ready to give his support to a reforming monarchy as long as he believed in the sincerity of its good intentions. This made it possible for him actively to influence the solution of the peasant problem. But after 1861 his influence declined. His openly pro-Polish position in 1862–3 repelled from him all that section of opinion that was not openly revolutionary, while on the other hand his theories were beginning to seem backward and his mentality antiquated to the young radicals. In 1864 he left London for Geneva, where he continued sporadically publishing numbers of the *Bell*, but with nothing like the former success. He died in 1870 in Paris and was buried in Nice.

Herzen has an equally important place in political history, in the history of ideas, and in purely literary history. A more detailed account of his political activities than I have already given in the foregoing paragraphs would be out of place in a history of literature. Nor can I here give his ideas the detailed treatment they would claim in any history of Russian thought. Herzen was the pioneer in Russia of the positivist and scientific mentality of nineteenth-century Europe and of socialism. But he was deeply rooted in the romantic and aristocratic past, and though the content of his ideas was material-

istic and scientific, their tone and flavour always remained romantic. The first stimulant of his thought was the French socialist Saint-Simon, and his gospel of the "emancipation of the flesh" from the traditional fetters of religion always remained one of Herzen's fundamental watchwords.

Socialism to Herzen was not so much a positive program as an incentive and a ferment that was to destroy the outworn civilization of the West, and to rejuvenate the senescent tissues of European humanity. He was the first to lay the foundations of Russian agrarian socialism, which hopes to build a socialistic Russia not so much on a Europeanized proletariat as on the communistic tradition of the Russian peasant, and the revolutionary initiative of an enlightened and generous minority. This idea was inherited from Herzen by the populists of the seventies and still in substance survives in the program of the socialist-revolutionaries. But Herzen was always more political than social, and the inspiration of his thought was always liberty rather than equality. Few Russians have felt individual freedom and the rights of man as keenly as Herzen.

Herzen's socialism has a distinctly national colouring. He believed in Russia's vitality as he did not believe in that of the West, and he loved Russia with a passionate love. It was free from all political patriotism, and yet it is impossible not to discern the note of patriotic exultation when he had occasion to speak of the victories of Peter or Catherine, or of 1812. This is due not only to his, after all, deep roots in the past of his class, but also to a genuine feeling of racial pride.* He hated the Government of Nicholas I and the forces of reaction, but he loved not only the people, but also all that was sincere and generous in the intellectual classes; he had a warm feeling for the Slavophils, with whose Christianity he was in no sort of sympathy, but from whom he derived much of his faith in the Russian people. In the West, though at one time he gave himself entirely to the European Revolution, he had sympathy only with the workman, especially the French workman, in whom he saw a force that was to destroy the selfish *bourgeois*

* This was what Marx had in view when he called Herzen a "Cossack."

civilization he loathed. For the rest he had nothing but either contempt or indifference.

What makes Herzen, however, much more than a mere teacher of revolutionary doctrines, and conciliates with him even those who are least inclined to share his aspirations, is his intellectual fairness and capacity for detachment. His understanding was very comprehensive and wide. In spite of the extremeness of his views, in spite of his strong political passions, he could understand his enemies, judge them by *their* standards, and, though a socialist, see the good sides of the monarchy of the Romanovs and of the old civilization of the West, and, although a militant atheist, the virtues of historical Christianity. His historical intuition, his ability to see history in broad outline, to understand the significance of details, and to *relate* them to the main lines, are marvellous. His thought is mainly historical, and the way he understood history as a spontaneous, unpredestined, incalculable force continuing the equally spontaneous and unpredestined evolution of nature is what makes him akin to Bergson. He saw the "creativeness" of the process of becoming, the novelty of every future in relation to every past, and the pages he devotes to the confutation of all idea of predestination, all notion of an extrinsic *idea* guiding human history, are among the most eloquent he wrote.

As a writer Herzen lives chiefly by what he wrote between his departure from Russia and the foundation of the *Bell* (1857). His writings after that date are of much greater importance for the political than for the literary historian, and it is not on his articles in the *Bell* that his reputation as a Russian classic rests. Though brilliant and effective like all he wrote, they contain only an echo of the highest qualities we find in his earlier political writings. His early work written before he left Russia gives only a foretaste of the essential Herzen. His stories and his novel do not give him a place among the greater novelists, in spite of their considerable psychological interest and delicacy of observation. The most interesting, perhaps, of all the stories is *Dr. Krupov.* Dr. Krupov reappears as one of the characters in *Whose Fault?* He is an

interesting figure of the sceptical and scientific medical man who played such an important part in destroying the romantic mentality of the idealists.

But the works written during his first ten years abroad (1847–57) secure for Herzen a permanent place among the national classics. They include *Letters from France and Italy* (1847–50), *From the Other Shore* (1847–50), a series of propaganda pamphlets written in the early fifties (of which *The Russian People and Socialism* is the most notable), and *My Past and Thoughts* (*Byloe i Dumy*), an autobiography written mainly in 1852–5, but continued fragmentarily after that date, and to which he was still adding in the sixties.

By far the most important of Herzen's political writings are his eight articles (three of them are in dialogue form) that compose *From the Other Shore*. Only in them we get his full intellectual measure and can gauge his intellectual fairness and the profundity of his historical intuition. The book was called forth by the failure of what Herzen had hoped would be the dawn of a revolutionary and socialist Europe. Although distinctly dating in most of the details, it still reads as one of the most significant things ever written on human history and is perhaps particularly suggestive and appropriate reading in our own days, even though we find it often impossible to endorse Herzen's reading of historical facts. Alone of all Herzen's political writings it was written not for propaganda purposes, and the edge of its irony is directed not against the Old Europe, but against the idealistic optimism of revolutionaries, who expected too much and too early, and were either too soon disillusioned or held too firmly to their errors and superstitions. To destroy the *religion* of revolution and socialism, with its rhetoric and its official optimism, and to replace it by a clear and sober *will* for revolution were Herzen's aim. It is here that his intuition of life receives full expression—a hopeful and active acceptance of the "stream of history" viewed as a *creative* process, not as preordained necessity, is the key-note of the book.

His other political writings are different from *From the Other Shore* in being primarily propaganda and written not

in the disinterested pursuit of truth for oneself, but with the aim of influencing other men's actions and opinions. It is in them, however, that Herzen's eloquence comes out especially well. It is a French and romantic type of eloquence—loosely built, spacious, varied, abundantly availing itself of repetition and purely emotional effects, never losing an opportunity to make a side-stroke, or score a point in a parenthesis or in a subordinate clause. The best example of this kind of writing is his letter to Michelet, on *The Russian People and Socialism*, an eloquent assertion of the difference between the people and the State, and a defence of the former from all responsibility for the crimes of the latter, in particular in relation to Poland. The pamphlet is still one of the foundation stones of Russian revolutionary socialism.

Herzen's eloquence is easily translatable, for it is not based on the value of words and sounds, but on the unfolding of ideas and images. His Russian has been variously judged. It is frankly incorrect—he was one of the last great Russian writers who grew up on French, and he is never afraid of an honest and unabashed gallicism. It is the language of a man who speaks many languages with equal ease. But it is strongly personal and full of irresponsible vitality. It has the charm of freedom and immediateness—it is like the fluent and eloquent talk of a brilliant and passionate conversationalist. Though he cannot be regarded as a master of words, if "style is the man" Herzen is most undoubtedly a master of style.

The same characteristics of his style, but in an even more unfettered and spontaneous form, still more like conversation and relatively free from rhetoric, recur in his autobiography, *My Past and Thoughts*. To the majority of readers it will ever remain his principal work. Its attraction lies above all in its freedom and obvious sincerity. Not that there is no pose in it --Herzen was too French and too romantic to do without a pose. He was, in fact, a rare example of a Russian not afraid of an obvious pose. The absence of self-conscious and excessive sincerity, the superficiality, the somewhat matter-of-course theatricality of *My Past and Thoughts* is its essential charm to the open-minded reader. Apart from the tone of the voice

there is little self in Herzen's memoirs and less introspection. The relative conventionality of his psychology makes it all the simpler and truer, for he speaks of himself in universal and accepted terms. The best part of the book from this point of view is the wonderful (recently published) account of his wife's love-affair with Herwegh. Here the impression of absolute human sincerity is attained precisely because Herzen openly and sincerely speaks of the relations in terms of current fiction; and this relating the true emotions of two real people to the accepted *clichés* of current psychological thinking produces that impression of universal humanity which no one who reads those pages can fail to have.

But the greater part of the book is not subjective, and its most frequently memorable pages are those where he speaks of the outer world. Herzen is a great portrait-painter, an impressionist—and the impressions he left of his father and other relations, of the Moscow idealists, and of the leaders of the European Revolution are unforgettably vivid. His lightness of touch, which never insists and always moves on, gives them a wonderfully convincing mobility. Not the least remarkable passages of the book are those where he gives a wider historical background to the narrative: the first parts devoted to his life before his exile contain the broadest, truest, and most penetrating view of Russian social and cultural history in the first half of the nineteenth century. They are a great historical classic.

4. THE RADICAL LEADERS

The influence of Herzen as a begetter of ideas and a ferment of thought and also as a purely political journalist was very great, but he was too individual and too complex a personality to be a representative man, or to become the adequate mouthpiece of a movement, and no group of Russian radicals ever adhered to him as a teacher or recognized him for a leader. The leadership of the radical intelligentsia, vacant since the death of Belinsky, was from 1856 onward exercised by a succession of

truly representative men—Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Lavrov, and Mikhaylovsky.

The first two had much in common. Both were the sons of comparatively prosperous and highly venerated priests. While rejecting all the traditional ideas of their homes, they retained much of the moral atmosphere they had been brought up in: they were puritans, almost ascetics, and fanatics. Like true puritans they combined purity with hatred, and, while they were regarded as saints by the radical church, all the "gentiles" who came in touch with them without sharing their ideas resented their venom and bitterness. Herzen called them the "bilious set" (*zhelcheviki*) and Turgenev said to Chernyshevsky on one occasion: "You are a snake, but Dobrolyubov is a rattlesnake." They were plebeians, uncontaminated by the artistic and æsthetic culture of the educated gentry, and they simply had no use for any non-utilitarian cultural values. Russian literature before their time was concentrated to them in Belinsky and in Gogol, interpreted as a purely social satirist. The literature of their time they regarded as a collection of texts for utilitarian sermons, or as a map of contemporary life, of which the only merit lay in its handiness and accuracy. All that was traditional and romantic they rejected. Their faith was in only two gods—in western science as the principle of progress, and in the Russian peasant as the depository of socialistic ideals. A new plebeian intelligentsia, risen from the people and imbued with scientific rationalism, was to build a new Russia in the place of the corrupt land of serfdom.

The older of the two men, Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshévsky, was born in 1828, at Saratov. In 1855 he published a doctoral thesis on *The Æsthetic Relations of Art to Reality*, where he contended that art, being nothing but a more or less adequate imitation of reality, is always inferior to the reality it represents. In the following years he published *Studies of the Age of Gogol*, which laid the foundation of the utilitarian, civic criticism of literature and revived the cult of Belinsky, whose name had been taboo in the years of extreme reaction. After 1857 he concentrated on economic and social questions.

He became the recognized leader of the radical young generation. After 1861, dissatisfied by the Emancipation, he passed to more active revolutionary action, and round him grew up the first nuclei of Revolutionary Socialism. They did not go further than the printing of proclamations, but in 1862 Chernyshevsky was arrested. For two years he was confined in the Fortress of Petersburg and there wrote his famous novel *What to Do?* the first and the most influential of a long succession of tendentious radical novels. In the person of the hero, Rakhmetov, he represented the ideal radical, pure and strong—a populist and an ascetic. In 1864 Chernyshevsky was deported to Siberia, where he remained at first in a convict prison, then in the isolated north-eastern town of Vilyuysk. In 1883 he was allowed to live in Astrakhan, and afterwards in his native Saratov. He died in 1889.

Nikolay Alexandrovich Dobrolyúbov was born in 1836 in Nizhni-Novgorod. He began contributing to the *Sovremennik* in 1856, and from 1858 to his early death, in 1861, was its chief critic. His character was marked by a high puritanic morality, a fierce fanaticism, and an almost inhuman working-capacity. Like Chernyshevsky he came to be regarded as a saint by the radical intelligentsia. He was the most famous and influential of the critics after Belinsky: all the radical intelligentsia from 1860 to 1905 was brought up on him. Though all his work is about works of imaginative literature, it would be grossly unjust to call it literary criticism. Dobrolyubov had, it is true, a certain sense of literary values, and the choice of works which he consented to use as texts for his sermons was, on the whole, happy, but he never so much as attempted to discuss their literary aspects: he used them only as maps or photographs of contemporary Russian life, and pretexts for social sermons. All his most famous articles, *What is Oblomovism?* (Goncharov's *Oblomov*), *A Kingdom of Darkness* (Ostrovsky's early plays), *A Ray of Light in the Kingdom of Darkness* (Ostrovsky's *Thunderstorm*), *When Will There be Really Day?* (Turgenev's *On the Eve*), are criticisms of Russian life as reflected in those works. His task was to create a democratic intelligentsia that would be inspired by faith in

progress and a desire to serve the people, and that might take the place of the romantic and æsthetic, lazy and ineffective, educated gentry—of which he regarded Oblomov as the true incarnation. All old Russia—the gentry, the merchants, the traditions of Church and State—he hated with equal violence, and to tear the intelligentsia and the people away from everything connected with old times was his one aim.

Dobrolyubov died the year of the Emancipation, and about the same time a new generation of radicals came to the forefront, which concentrated on the propaganda of materialism. Natural science became the order of the day, and the principal enemy not so much of the Government as the old superstitions of idealism, art, and everything romantic. The descent of man from apes became the first article of the new creed, and the dissection of frogs a symbolic rite of their religion. The new radicals called themselves "thinking realists," but did not resent the appellation of "nihilists" given them by their enemies. Their leader was Dmitri Ivanovich Pisarev (1840–1868). He was a squire by birth, but thoroughly imbued with the new anti-romantic and materialistic ideas. Like Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov he was a man of high moral character and, though an apostle of the emancipation of the flesh, a puritan in life. In 1862 he was involved in the printing of proclamations and sentenced to four years' imprisonment in the Fortress. There it was he wrote most of his articles. After his release, in 1866, he almost ceased writing. Two years later he was drowned while bathing. Pisarev was unquestionably a man of brilliant gifts. Though diffuse, like all Russian journalists, and truculent, like all those of the sixties, he had genuine wit and verve. He was a born polemist and a past-master in the art of killing his enemies. Nor can there be any doubt of the sincerity and high seriousness with which he conducted his campaign of destruction. In the domain of literary criticism he rejected all art, admitting "art with a purpose" only in so far as it was immediately useful for the purposes of educating a scientific intelligentsia. His famous uncrowning of Pushkin, for all its naïveté, may still be read with pleasure. It is healthily sincere and outspoken. At any rate Pisarev very well shows

in it the entire wrongness of Belinsky's idealistic interpretation of the great poet.

After the death of Pisarev the spirit of nihilism begins to degenerate; socialism and revolution once more come to the forefront. The seventies are the age of the populists (*Narodniks*, from *Narod-people*), the successors of Herzen and of Chernyshevsky.

Their most influential journalistic leaders were Lavrov and Mikhaylovsky. Peter Lavrovich Lavróv was a man of the older, pre-Reform generation (1823–1900). He began life as an officer in the artillery. In the end of the sixties he emigrated and after the death of Herzen became the principal figure of the Russian political emigration. He is widely known as the author of the so-called "Russian Marseillaise," which does not give him a high place among poets. His principal work, one which had a decisive influence on the greatest generation of Russian revolutionaries, was *Historical Letters* (1870), where he explains all progress as the effect of the action of "critically thinking individualities." The book is a powerful assertion of the *rôle* of the individual in history and became the gospel of revolutionary action. It was particularly made wide use of to justify political terror.

Nikolay Konstantinovich Mikhaylóvsky (1842–1904) was one of that generation of the young gentry whom it is customary to call "conscience-stricken nobles"—i. e. nobles who were dominated by a peculiar complex of social guilt: to wipe out the guilt of their serf-owning ancestors by sacrificing their lives to the people was their one aim in life. Mikhaylovsky took no part in revolutionary or illegal propagandist activities, considering it his duty to preserve as far as possible an open tribune for the propaganda of radical views. His influence in the seventies was enormous and, together with Lavrov's, practically all-powerful among the young generation of radicals. The starting-point of Mikhaylovsky's socialism was the idea of right and justice, and its moral and idealistic tone coloured the whole of Russian socialism till the advent of Marxism. Mikhaylovsky was primarily a sociologist, and his most important work is

What is Progress? (1873), directed against the mechanical struggle-for-life conception of the English evolutionists. In literary criticism Mikhaylovsky was a man of strong party-feeling, and made his criticism quite subservient to civic ends. But he was not devoid of genuine critical insight, and his articles on Tolstoy (1873) and on Dostoyevsky (1882) will ever give him a place among genuine critics. In the former he foresaw with wonderful acumen the essentially anarchistic foundation of Tolstoy's thought, which was to lead him to his later social doctrines. The latter is still one of the most forceful statements of the case against Dostoyevsky.

5. SLAVOPHILS AND NATIONALISTS

The Slavophil movement, started by Khomyakov and the Kireyevskys, was continued by men of the next generation—Yuri Samarin (1819–1876) and the two Aksakovs, the sons of S. T. Aksakov, Constantine (1817–1861) and Ivan (1823–1886).

The latter is the greatest literary name among the younger Slavophils. He carried the initial idealistic impulse of Slavophilism undiminished and undiluted into the gloomy days of Alexander III, and in a time of violent party-hatred was one of the few public men respected by his opponents. He began his literary career as a poet (v. *infra*), but it was as a political publicist that he became famous. He was exceptionally outspoken and (unlike most of the radicals) refused to learn the art of evading the Censorship by circumlocution. He was always particularly courageous in insisting on the rights of free speech. The height of his influence was reached in 1876–8, when he was the mouthpiece of the general enthusiasm for the liberation of the Balkan Slavs. Next to Herzen Aksakov is the greatest of Russian political journalists. His style is vigorous and straightforward, less rhetorical than Herzen's. His Russian, like Khomyakov's, retains the distinction of the preceding age, without its gallicisms. Aksakov was married to a daughter of Tyutchev and after his father-in-law's death

wrote his *Life*, which, though it dwells chiefly on the political aspects of Tyutchev's activities, contains pages that are among the best in all Russian literary criticism.

The pure Slavophilism of the older generation, idealistic and (not so much in doctrine as in tone) aristocratic, came to an end with Ivan Aksakov. Only minor men of the younger generation carried on its traditions. But new types of Slavophils arose in the fifties and sixties. These were the democratic Slavophilism of Grigoriev and Dostoyevsky, and the biological nationalism of N. Danilevsky. Of the former I have already spoken in connexion with Grigoriev and shall speak again in connexion with Dostoyevsky. Besides these two great men its most eminent partisan was Nikolay Nikolayevich Strákhov (1828–1895), the friend of Tolstoy, a philosopher and a critic of considerable eminence, who is known to the English public by his famous letter to Tolstoy on the dark sides of the character of Dostoyevsky. The doctrine of "biological nationalism" was first voiced by Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilévsky (1822–1885), whose *Russia and Europe* (1869) is still a living influence. Its ideas are traceable in the works of Oswald Spengler and in those of the Russian "Eurasians" of our times.

The reign of Alexander II was an age not only of reform and revolution, but also of wars and of rapid military expansion. The heroes of this expansion, Generals Chernyayev and Skobelev, were immensely popular, particularly among the Slavophils. There grew up a sort of Slavophil doctrine of strategy and tactics which insisted on the existence of a Russian school of warfare and on the great tradition of Suvorov. The principal exponent of this was General M. I. Dragomírov (1830–1908), a man of considerable literary gifts, famous in his later years for his cutting epigrams and witticisms, and General Rostislav Fadéyev (1824–1883), the brother of "Zinaida R-va" and the uncle of Count Witte, a brilliant writer on military subjects as well as a remarkable political journalist.

The growth of the revolutionary movement and the Polish Rebellion of 1863 brought into existence a new reactionary movement. Its principal mouthpiece was Michael Nikiforovich Katkov (1818–1889), next to Herzen and Ivan Aksakov

the most influential political journalist of his time. He began as the champion of a moderate, "English," constitutional liberalism. But after 1862–3 he was goaded into reaction by the Poles and nihilists, and from that time till his death he was the dictator of all conservative opinion. Never in the course of Russian history was a journalist so attentively listened to by the Government, or so often responsible for the Government's policy. But he was in no sense a creator of ideas, and besides mere security of the State he had really no superior principles to lean against. As a writer he is distinctly inferior to Herzen and to Aksakov.

A really creative mind, a mind almost of genius, and of extraordinary originality, was the more extreme, more independent, and less utilizable reactionary Constantine Leontiev (1831–1891), whose principal work, however, belongs to the latter seventies and eighties, and whom I have given ample treatment in *Contemporary Russian Literature.*

6. THE ECLECTIC POETS

After the death of Lermontov it became the general conviction that the age of poetry was over. In the fifties there was a certain revival of interest in poets and poetry. But in the sixties the school of Pisarev launched a systematic campaign against all verse, and some of the most prominent poets were actually hooted into silence. The poetry of the contemporaries of the great novelists is less significant both than the poetry of the preceding, Golden Age, and than the prose fiction of its own. With few exceptions the poets of this Silver Age lack vitality, and with hardly an exception their technique is lax, and insufficiently conscious. A feature common to the poets of the period, which they do not share with the novelists, is their *eclecticism*, their submission to a compromise. They did not believe in the rights of the poetical imagination and sought to reconcile it with the modern spirit of science and positive knowledge. Only two poets remained free from this eclecticism: Fet, who had a genuinely transcendent poetic vision, and Nekrasov, who was truly in tune with the stream of history.

But Fet was appreciated only by the extreme literary Right, and Nekrasov only by the Left—the middle poets met with much more universal and unquestionable approbation.

The characteristic feature of a central group of poets of the generation of the forties might be defined as their "imagism" (without any too close associations with Miss Lowell and Mr. Gould Fletcher). This "imagism" was partly due to the German-born theory of Belinsky that poetry was by definition "thinking in images" (*myshlenie òbrazami*). It was a parallel development to French Parnassianism and the poetry of the English Keatsians. It expressed itself in a predilection for visual subjects, among which nature and classical antiquity were particularly popular.

The most famous in his own day of these "imagists," and altogether the most representative poet of the age, was Valerian Maykov's brother, Apollon Nikolaevich Máykov (1821–1897). His "imagism" was partly due to his early training as an artist. He began publishing verse early and in 1842 won general approbation by a volume of very prettily made anthological poems, inspired by a plastic conception of the Ancient World, by the classicism of Goethe and the Chénieresque poems of Pushkin.

Maykov's verse answered admirably to the taste of an age which had forgotten that poetry was the art of words. It had lost all interest in romantic feeling, but did not want to go without all poetical enjoyment. It could not conceive that poetry might and ought to cease being "poetical," and so its one resource was images. Maykov was mildly "poetical," and mildly realistic; mildly tendentious, and never emotional. Images are always the principal thing in his poems. Some of them (always subject to the restriction that he had no style and no diction) are happy discoveries, like the short and very well-known poems on spring and rain. But his more realistic poems are spoilt by sentimentality, and his more "poetic" poems hopelessly inadequate—their beauty is mere mid-Victorian tinsel. Few of his more ambitious attempts are successful. The best is the delightful idyll on *Fishing* (1854), where for once he recovered the relative sense of style he had displayed in his

early poems. Maykov always aspired to express ideas. In his early years he was a sort of eclectic-progressive-Grecian idealist. Later in life he became a bigoted Byzantine reactionary. His *opus magnum* was to be a large tragedy on the subject of the struggle between Imperial Rome and the early Christians. A first fragment was written in 1851 (*Three Deaths*); the whole, under the title of *Two Worlds*, was published in 1882. Although it contains numerous passages that prove Maykov to have had a strong brain, the verse is flat and the conception of the whole is a failure, chiefly owing to his entire lack of sympathy with early Christianity. There is reason to think that Maykov the poet did not come up to the calibre of Maykov the man. At any rate Dostoyevsky had more respect for him than for any of his contemporaries, and found in him the most stimulating and responsive of correspondents.

Of the other "imagists" of the mid-nineteenth century I shall mention only Nikolay Fedorovich Shcherbína (1821–1869) and Lev Alexandrovich Mey (1822–1862). The former had in him the stuff of a true poet; he had something to say and a personal vision of the world. His mother was a Greek, and his vision of antiquity has something homely and intimate in it that can only be explained by racial affinity. There is nothing cold or classical in his Greek girls, and he had a genuine sympathy with the Hellenic sense of measure and harmony.

The "imagists" imagined themselves to be continuers of the "objective" tradition of Pushkin. But the romantic "subjective" tradition of Lermontov also survived. The most romantic of the mid-nineteenth-century eclecticists was Yakov Petrovich Polónsky (1819–1898), for sheer gift of song one of the greatest poets of his generation. His life was uneventful; he was an intimate and devoted friend of Turgenev's and of many other writers of the time. In his later years he was, together with Maykov and Grigorovich, the last remnant in Petersburg literary society of the great age of giants. Polonsky is the most typical instance of that conflict between the rights of poetry and of modern thought of which I have spoken. His poetical experience was purely romantic, but he was afraid to give himself away to it, and considered it his duty to write well-

meaning verse on the light of progress, on freedom of speech, and other modern subjects. But the really valuable part of his poetry is quite uncivic and quite free from that expression of ideas. It is very pure and spontaneous, and, though obviously proceeding from a weak frame and weak lungs, his voice is capable of attaining to the highest summits of lyrical expression. He is the only Russian poet capable of evoking the delicate, forest effects of the German romanticists, and next to Lermontov the only one who had a vision of a distant land, beyond the clouds of sunset. Many of his best lyrics are dream poems. He has also Lermontov's power of making the most delicate and poignant poetry out of the common stuff of everyday life and words. His romanticism is very Russian, genuinely akin to the spirit of Russian folk-song and folk-tales. Such a poem of his as *The Bell* (*Kolokolchik*, 1858) has few equals in the range of Russian lyrical poetry for its extraordinary delicate pregnancy. Of all Russian poets Polonsky, in his best lyrics, is the one who is surest to captivate the English reader of Russian poetry, for he has both the qualities that the English romanticist regards as synonymic with all poetry, and a simplicity and modest, realistic grace that are peculiarly, and obviously, Russian. It is no wonder that he is a special favourite of Mr. Maurice Baring.

7. ALEXEY TOLSTOY

The most popular, the most versatile, and ultimately the most personally significant of the eclectic poets was Count Alexey Konstantinovich Tolstoy, a distant cousin of the great novelist. He was born in 1817 of a family of the higher Petersburg nobility. His mother was the sister of the novelist Pogorelsky-Perovsky. He received a very careful education, and in later life was proud of having sat as a boy on the knee of Goethe. He was a playfellow of the future Emperor Alexander II and always remained his friend. During the Crimean War he served as an officer in a militia regiment. Apart from that he held only honorary employment at court. His life was prosperous, happy, and, except for the passionate love-

affair with the lady who afterwards became his wife, uneventful. He lived in Petersburg, on his estate in Ukraina, and abroad. By culture he was largely a cosmopolitan, and a confirmed westernizer; in politics, an aristocratic liberal. He died in 1875.

He began his literary career in 1840 with a fantastic story (*The Vampire*) in the style of the German romanticists, but it was only by 1854 that his poetic individuality assumed a mature form and he began regularly publishing his verse. A little earlier, together with his two cousins Zhemchuzhnikov, he had begun publishing satirical, humorous, and nonsense verse and prose under the joint pseudonym of Kosma Prutkov. "Kosma Prutkov" flourished from 1853 to 1863. Besides two volumes of lyrical narrative verse A. Tolstoy is the author of an historical novel *Prince Serebryany* (1863) and a dramatic trilogy (1866–70) (*v. infra*).

Like Maykov and Polonsky A. Tolstoy was an eclectic, but his eclecticism was not so much the outcome of a mechanical compromise between an inner impulse and an external authority ("the modern spirit") as an internal harmony and a balance of adjusted forces. There was in him a *mediocritas*, in the best classical meaning of the word. A many-sided and versatile serenity firmly grounded in an idealistic (Platonic) philosophy is the main characteristic of Alexey Tolstoy's poetry. He is the least tragic, the least disharmonious, of Russian poets, but his harmony is free from complacency and placidity. It is very clean and noble. From top to toe, in poetry as in life, Alexey Tolstoy was a gentleman.

Not being a sufficiently great and original poet to transcend the limitations of his degenerate age, Tolstoy shared with his contemporaries a certain technical inefficiency, an occasional flabbiness and indistinction of rhythm, and an uncertainty of diction. But he had a sense of the value of words, which ultimately muddled him through into style. His command of expression ranged over a great variety of manner and subject-matter. He is by far the greatest of Russian humorous and nonsense poets, and at the same time he was, in his generation, without rivals in the grand manner. There is nothing after

Derzhavin to compare with the solemn beauty of his paraphrase of St. John Damascene's prayer for the dead, used in the requiem of the Orthodox Church. His lyrics are sometimes the worse for wear and show too much banality and sentimentality, but many of them have preserved all their freshness, and still produce the impression of exquisitely clear dew-drops. One of the chief charms is that poetical realism which seems to be an almost exclusive monopoly of the Russian nineteenth century, and of which such a charming example is the one translated by Mr. Maurice Baring in the preface to *The Oxford Book of Russian Verse*.

Alexey Tolstoy's ballads are often operatic and date too distinctly from about 1860. But in some of them his sense of language and his unique power of making use of proper names are displayed at their best. Those especially about the struggles of the Baltic Slavs with the Germans, *Rugevit* and *Borivoy*, are particularly splendid. The latter is perhaps the most bubbling and exhilarating piece of poetic play between Pushkin and Andrey Bely. It is what Macaulay's *Armada* might have been like if Macaulay had been a poet.

Of his longer narrative poems *The Dragon* (1875), a tale of Guelph and Ghibelline Italy in *terza rima*, contains long passages of grandly sonorous verse, really evocative of Dantesque majesty—as, for instance, the splendid invective of the Guelph narrator against the traitorous Ghibelline cities of Upper Italy, where the mere enumeration of the names of the Lombard cities produces an effect of thundering beauty. The most original and exquisite of the longer poems is *The Portrait* (1874), a romantic, humorous poem in octaves in a style descended, through Lermontov, from Byron's *Don Juan*, relating of the love of the adolescent poet for an eighteenth-century portrait of a lady. The blend of humour and semi-mystical romance is perfectly successful, and the feeling of ironical and wistful home-sickness for a distant land is expressed with exquisite delicacy.

The Portrait is first cousin to the purely humorous poems of Alexey Tolstoy, of which *The Dream of Councillor Popov* is likewise in octaves. It is the purest glory of Russian humor-

ous poetry—a mixture of keen and pointed satire (aimed at the popularity-seeking minister Valuyev and at the Secret Police) with sheer delight in preposterous fun. It is to-day probably the least questionable of Tolstoy's claims to immortality. Another delightful humorous poem is the *Mutiny in the Vatican*, where a risqué subject (the revolt of the papal castrates) is treated with delightful ambiguity and playfulness.

But the most famous of Alexey Tolstoy's humorous creations is Kosma Prutkov, which he shares with the two Zemchuzhnikovs. Kosma Prutkov is a sort of Russian Prudhomme. He is a clerk in the Ministry of Finance (a side-hit at the poet Benediktov) and the incarnation of self-centred and arrogantly naïve complacency. The character of Prutkov is chiefly given in his biography and in his proudly platitudinous fables. But he is also made the pretext for witty parodies of contemporary poets, while his father and grandfather are made to contribute plays and anecdotes which are a mixture of excellent parody of old styles with sheer absurdity and nonsense. The gem of the whole collection is the comedy *Fantasia*, the most riotous piece of nonsense in the language.

Kosma Prutkov became the founder of a whole school of nonsense poetry. Its most eminent members in the later nineteenth century were Vladimir Soloviev and his friend, the gifted dilettante designer, Count Theodore Sollohub.

8. FET

Afanasi Afanasievich Fet was born in 1820, in the Province of Orel. He was the son of a squire of the name of Shenshin, and of a German lady, the German spelling of whose name was Foeth. Their marriage, contracted abroad, was invalid in Russia. Thus Fet was officially an illegitimate son and, until he came of age, a foreign subject. His discovery of these facts on first leaving home for school was a cruel experience to him, and he devoted his life to obtaining the rights of Russian nobility and his father's name. This he ultimately succeeded in doing in 1876, when he was authorized by an imperial decree

to assume the name of Shenshin. He retained his former name in literature till his death.

He was educated in a private school in Lievland, and afterwards in Moscow, as a boarding pupil of Pogodin's, who almost starved him. At the University of Moscow he was together with Apollon Grigoriev, in whose house he lived as a paying guest. In 1840 he published, at his own expense, a first volume of very immature verse, which hardly contains any promise of a future poet. But already in 1842 he published in the *Moskvityanin* some of his most lasting and perfect lyrics. On leaving the University he entered the military service and for fifteen years served in various cavalry regiments, firmly intent on obtaining the grade that gave nobility. His ill luck had it that during his service this grade was twice raised, and only in 1856 on being promoted Captain of the Guards could he leave the service with the satisfaction of being at last a Russian noble. After a short journey abroad he married (very practically and unsentimentally) and settled down on a small estate to make a fortune. Meanwhile his poems had made him a reputation, and in the later fifties he was one of the most prominent figures in the literary world. He contracted lasting friendships with Turgenev and Tolstoy, who appreciated his common sense and did not dislike his extreme reserve. It is from Fet that we know the details of the famous quarrel of the two great novelists. It was he also who afterwards brought them together once more. Meanwhile the young generation of anti-æsthetic radicals, provoked by the overtly uncivic character of his poetry and by his notoriously reactionary sympathies, started a systematic campaign against him. They eventually succeeded in hooting him into silence; after the publication in 1863 of a third edition of his poems Fet disappeared from the printed page for twenty years. He lived on his estate actively and successfully engaged in increasing his wealth, and in the capacity of Justice of the Peace determinately fighting for the interests of his class against the peasants. He succeeded in making himself a name for exceedingly reactionary class-selfishness, and in buying a new and better property in the

Province of Kursk. The principal gratifying events of his later years were the recovery of his family name, the rank of Chamberlain granted him by Alexander III, and the flattering attention of the Grand Duke Constantine. In his relations with the imperial family Fet was shamelessly and on principle snobbish and servile.

Though after 1863 he ceased publishing poetry he never ceased writing it, and his poetic genius continued maturing during these years of apparent silence. In 1883 at last he once more appeared before the public and from that date onwards published a succession of small volumes under the title of *Evening Lights*. He was never prolific as a poet, and gave his spare time to vast enterprises of a more mechanical nature: he wrote three volumes of memoirs and translated his favourite Roman poets and his favourite philosopher, Schopenhauer. Strongly influenced by Schopenhauer, Fet was a convinced atheist and anti-Christian. So when in his seventy-second year the sufferings caused him by his asthma began to become intolerable, he very naturally contemplated cutting them short by suicide. His people, of course, did all they could to prevent him from doing so and kept him narrowly guarded. But Fet displayed a remarkable fixity of purpose. Once, profiting by being a moment alone, he got hold of a blunt knife, but before he was able to do the deed, he died of heart failure (1892).

Fet is a typical example of a poet with a double life. In his student years he was, like all his contemporaries, expansive and naïvely open to generous and ideal feelings, but later on he disciplined himself into a guarded reserve that had all the appearance (and a good deal of the substance) of calculated callousness. In his life he was studiedly selfish, reticent, and cynical in judging other people's enthusiasms. He studiously avoided mixing real life with his ideal life of a poet. Hence that strange inadequacy that struck his contemporaries between the immaterial detached character of his nature poetry and his prosy acquisitiveness; between the staid and ordered life of his old age and the saturated passionateness of his late lyrics, built of the complete and disinterested *poetic* exploita-

tion of repressed and sublimated emotions. "It is impossible," he said in a preface to one of the volumes of *Evening Lights*, "to stay for long at a time in the rarefied air of the mountain tops of poetry." He drew a watertight partition between his two selves. The self of real life is present in some of his odes to his august friends, in some second-rate epigrams, and above all in his remarkable, unusually reticent, and yet fascinating memoirs: *Early Years of My Life* and *My Reminiscences*. Quite disingenuous, they are one of the most studied masks ever made himself by a poet, diffident of the stings of vulgar reality. They give no notion of his inner life, but are full of interesting, though often very arranged, information on other people. His essential poetry is entirely free from this superficial self.

In poetry Fet was first and foremost the uncompromising champion of the rights of pure poetry. He was no eclecticist, and entirely devoted himself to the true expression of his poetic experience, which was in sympathy with many of his best contemporaries, but was much against the grain of the leaders of critical opinion.

His early verse includes purely "imagist" poems on classical subjects, which are better than Maykov's or Shcherbina's, but would not be sufficient to single out Fet as the greatest "art-for-art" poet of his age. The real early Fet is contained in the wonderful nature lyrics and "melodies," the art of which he seems to have learned from no one. They have much in common with Verlaine, except that Fet's robust pantheism is very unlike the morbid sensibility of the French poet. He developed his own style extraordinarily early, and one of his most perfect and characteristic melodies appeared in 1842. It is thus done into English by Professor Elton, who has succeeded rather happily in rendering the movement of the rhythm and of the images:

Storm on the skies in the evening,
Noise of the wrath of the sea;
Storm on the sea, and the thronging
Thoughts that are torture to me;
Storm on the sea, and insurgent
Thoughts there are clamorous in me;

Cloud after cloud flying blackly,
Noise of the wrath of the sea.

Such poems, deliberately excluding all but the music of emotion and associations, do not strike us to-day as very exceptional. But to the mid-nineteenth-century Russian critics (*not* to the creative artist, like Turgenev, Tolstoy, or Nekrasov, all of whom were fervent admirers of Fet) they seemed little better than downright moonshine. Not all of Fet's early lyrics are as short and as purely musical as this. There are larger, more elaborate, and more visual dream poems, such as the marvellous *Fantasy* (before 1847). There are also more sober, less singing, poems of distinctly Russian country landscape, and more purely pantheistic visions, such as the wonderful poem where, lying "on a stack of hay in a southern night," he looks at the stars and "like the first man in Eden sees Night face to face." No description, however, can give an idea of the pure poetry of these lyrics. They want a good translator; they are more translatable than most Russian poetry is, for their effect does not so much depend on the elusive overtones of the Russian words used in them as on the rhythm and music of the images.

After 1863, and especially in the eighties, Fet became more metaphysical. He more frequently tackled philosophical subjects and brooded on the eternal problems of artistic perception and expression. His syntax becomes more difficult and condensed, at times obscure, sometimes not unlike that of the sonnets of Shakspere. The highest summits of Fet's later poetry are reached in his love poems, certainly the most extraordinary and concentratedly passionate love poems ever written by a man of seventy (not excepting Goethe). In them Fet's method of utilizing nothing but his repressed emotions for his poetry wins its most brilliant victories. They have a saturation that makes them look as if they were the quintessence of a life of passion. They are much more difficult to translate than his earlier melodies, and I hesitate to quote the examples that occur in Professor Elton's paper on Fet. But they are among the most precious diamonds of our poetry.

9. REALISTIC POETS

All the preceding poets were bracketed by their contemporaries as the party of "pure art," or "art for art's sake." This was not quite correct, as almost all of them used their verse to grind some ax or other. But they were not in substance civic or social poets. They were united by a common traditional conception of poetical beauty, a beauty of subject-matter, that was above and apart from current life. They were contrasted to the civic poets, who were the conscious mouthpieces of contemporary political and social feeling, and who, like the novelists, used the material of contemporary life for their poetry. The strength of the traditional conception of poetry as a thing unrelated to life, may be gauged by the fact that while in the novel no subject-matter was made use of that was not directly taken from contemporary Russian life, only a minority of the poets had the courage to introduce into their verse details of Russian reality. Poetry for the majority continued to be romantically conceived as a land of escape.

Civic poetry, in the hands of its more significant representative, did become realistic, but the rank and file of civic bards were often as eclectic as and more conventional than the "pure art" poets. Such for instance is the flat and tiresome poetry of the very amiable and respectable A. N. Pleshchéyev (1825–1893), who shared Dostoyevsky's fate as a member of the Petrashevsky circle, and in his later years was one of the most venerated remnants of the great age. Most of the civic poets were radicals of some kind or other, but one of the first and best was the Slavophil Ivan Aksakov, whose publicistic poems written in the forties and fifties, in which he calls the Russian intellectual to work and discipline and inveighs against his Oblomov-and-Rudin ineffectiveness and sloth, are admirable for their unadorned and straightforward strength. His narrative, realistic poem *The Tramp* (1852) was the first Russian *poem* of peasant life, and in many ways forestalls Nekrasov. There is much in common with Ivan Aksakov's in the poetry of Alexey Mikhaylovich Zhemchúzhnikov (1821–1907), a first cousin of Alexey Tolstoy's, and the co-creator with him of "Kosma Prut-

kov." His serious poetry chiefly belongs to his old age (first collected in 1892). It is inspired by indignation at the abandonment by the generation of the eighties of the high ideals of the age of reform. Somewhat harsh and metallic, it has a moral earnestness and cleanness of ring that make it very attractive.

Somewhat less civic and more eclectic is the poetry of Ivan Savvich Nikítin (1824–1861), like Koltsov the son of a tradesman of Voronezh. If his lyrical nature-poems are not particularly original, and taken alone would make one classify him with the minor eclectics, still they include the unutterably poignant dirge on his life (*Vyryta zastupom yama glubokaya*) and such a masterpiece of verbal painting and expressive rhythm as the opening lines, describing a water-mill, of *A Swallow's Nest*.

Nikitin's principal claim to attention, however, lies in his realistic poems of the life of the poor. He was inclined sometimes to idealize and sentimentalize them, but his best things are free from this sin. There is an almost epic calm in the long, uneventful, and powerful *Night Rest of the Drivers*, and an unsweetened realism in such poems of tragic misery as *The Tailor*. In his *opus magnum, Kulak* (*The Money-lender*), Nikitin introduced into poetry the methods of realistic prose. He succeeds in evoking pity and terror by the simple account of sordid and trivial misery. But he was not strong enough to create a really new art, or a really new attitude to poetry. And Russian poetical and civic realism would have to be regarded as a rather second-rate growth were it not for the great name of Nekrasov.

10. NEKRASOV

Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrásov was born in 1821, in Podolia, where his father happened to be billeted at the moment of his birth. The poet's mother was a Pole. Later on he developed a semi-religious cult for her memory, but the poetical and romantic biography he made her was almost entirely a creation of his imagination, and his feelings for her as long as she lived

do not appear to have been in any way exceptional. Soon after his son's birth his father left the service and settled down in his small estate in the Province of Yaroslav. He was a rude and uncultured hunting squire, a petty tyrant, and a brutal bully. From his early years Nekrasov detested his home. This made him a *déclassé*, though he retained till his death many characteristics of the average country squire, in particular a love of hunting, and of big gambling. At seventeen against his father's will he left home and went to Petersburg, where he matriculated as an external student of the University, but from lack of funds had soon to give up his studies. Unsupported by his father, he became a proletarian and for several years lived constantly on the brink of starvation. In 1840 he published a first volume of verse, which contained very little promise of future achievement. It was severely criticized by Belinsky. He engaged in literary and theatrical hack work and in publishing enterprises, and gave proof of considerable business ability. By 1845 he stood on his own legs and had virtually become the principal publisher of the young literary school. A series of literary miscellanies published by him had a considerable financial success. One of them was the famous *Peterburgsky Sbornik*, which contained Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk* and the first mature poems of Nekrasov himself. He became an intimate friend of Belinsky, who was as enthusiastic about his new verse as he had been severe to the 1840 volume and for whose memory Nekrasov formed a cult similar to that for his mother's. In 1846 Nekrasov acquired from Pletnev what had been Pushkin's *Sovremennik*, and, from the valetudinarian antique that it had become in the hands of the remnants of the "aristocracy," it became a splendidly paying concern and the best and most living literary review in Russia. It weathered the bad times of reaction and in 1856 became the rallying-ground of the extreme Left. It was suppressed in 1866, during the official panic that followed on the first attempt at Alexander II's life. But two years later Nekrasov together with Saltykov took over the *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, and remained the publisher and editor of the principal radical review till his death. Nekrasov was an editor of genius: his

ability of getting the best literature and the right men to write on current subjects was marvellous. As a publisher, however, he was a business man, unscrupulous, some said, and, all agreed, harsh and grasping. Like all the publishers of his time he underpaid his contributors, taking advantage of their disinterestedness. Nor was his personal life up to the standards of radical puritanism. He gambled heavily and regularly. He spent much money on his table and on his mistresses. He was not free from snobbery and liked the company of his social superiors. All this, in the opinion of many contemporaries, was not in harmony with the "philanthropic" and democratic character of his poetry. But what especially served against him was his cowardly behaviour on the eve of the suppression of the *Sovremennik*, when to save himself and his review he composed and recited in public a poem in praise of the dictator Count Muraviev, the most ruthless and determined of reactionaries. But, though Turgenev, Herzen, and most of his contemporaries hated Nekrasov, the radicals who had to work with him admired and loved him unreservedly and pardoned as venial his private and even his public sins.

His love-affair with Mme Panayev, who is the heroine of his best and most original love-lyrics, lasted for about ten years and is one of the best-known romances in Russian literary biography. For a time Nekrasov and the Panayevs lived as *ménage à trois*, a form of George Sandian liberalism popular among the intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century. Both Nekrasov and Mme Panayev got much more suffering than joy from their liaison. Nekrasov was a chronically recurrent invalid (the result of his irregular life) and subject to prolonged fits of melancholy and depression, when he suffered agonies and was a hell to all those who had to approach him. After his breach with Mme Panayev, Nekrasov lived with kept mistresses, until not long before his death he married a girl of the people. In 1875 his health gave way completely and his last two years were a slow agony, scarcely relieved by the devoted nursing of his wife. He died on 27th December 1877. His funeral was one of the most striking demonstrations of popularity ever accorded to a Russian writer.

In spite of his enormous popularity among the radicals, in spite of the tribute given to him as a poet by enemies like Grigoriev and Dostoyevsky, Nekrasov can hardly be said to have had his due during his lifetime. Even his admirers admired the matter of his poetry rather than its manner, and many of them believed that Nekrasov was a great poet only because matter mattered more than form, and in spite of his having written inartistically. To the æsthetes he was frankly unpalatable. According to Turgenev "poetry never so much as spent a night in his verse." Perhaps Grigoriev, with his profound intuition of values, was alone capable of really gauging the greatness of Nekrasov. After Nekrasov's death his poetry continued to be judged along party lines, rejected *en bloc* by the Right wing, and praised in spite of its inadequate form by the Left. Only with the advent of modernism has he really come into his own, and have his great originality and newness been fully appreciated. No poet's reputation has increased so steadily within these last ten or fifteen years. This has been due firstly to our increased ability to understand "non-poetic" poetry. It is also due to the displacement of Nekrasov the legendary radical saint (which he most certainly was not, in the sense in which Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Gleb Uspensky were) by a better-known and more real Nekrasov, a complex, not always edifying, but profoundly human and original, personality.

So different in most respects from his contemporaries, Nekrasov shared with them a lack of conscious craftsmanship and of artistic culture. It is characteristic that he had no knowledge of prosody and did not even know the names of the various metres. He only dimly and subconsciously knew what he was after and, though an excellent critic of other people's verse, he had no judgment of his own. He wasted much of his creative energy on ungrateful subjects which were not really congenial to him. He had a dangerous facility of writing verse, which he had developed during his years of hack work in writing vaudevilles and rhymed *feuilletons*. Much of what he wrote even in his maturity was empty rhymed journalism, and even in his best poems (with few exceptions) there are passages of unin-

spired verbiage. He was essentially a rebel against all the conventions of poetic taste, against all the stock in trade of "poetic" poetry, and the essence of his best and most original work is precisely the bold creation of a new poetry unfettered by traditional standards of taste. But his own creative taste was not always unerring and though he came very near creating a new and self-justified style (especially in his great satiric poem *Who is Happy?*) he never obtained a secure command of it. But the inspiration, the sheer poetic energy of many of even his most questionable poems, is so great that one has to accept the occasional bathos as an ingredient of the whole. For originality and for energy Nekrasov holds one of the very first places among Russian poets and need not fear a comparison with Derzhavin.

The main subject of Nekrasov's poetry was, in his own phrase, "the sufferings of the people." But his inspiration, though civic in its object, is subjective and individual rather than social. Except in those of his poems where he approaches nearest to the spirit of folk-song and thus frees himself from the all too personal, his poetry is always personal, never group poetry. The social wrongs of contemporary Russia are for Nekrasov not so much an objective fact as a torturing subjective experience. His social poetry proceeds from the pangs of a profoundly sensitive and cruelly martyred sensibility. One can speak of a "social compassion" complex in Nekrasov. It is precisely *compassion* (suffering with the other), not pity (condescending to the other's suffering), that animates the poetry of Nekrasov. For all the political seriousness and sincerity of Nekrasov's democratic feelings, psychologically speaking "the sufferings of the people" were to him an emanation, a symbol of his own sufferings—from poverty, from illness, from gloom, from the pangs of conscience. He had an unusual power of idealization and the need to create gods was the most profound of his needs. The Russian people was the principal of these gods; next to them stood the equally idealized and subjectively conditioned myths of his mother and of Belinsky. His idealized conception of the people of course tended towards sentimentality, and he did not always avoid this pitfall,

but at his (frequent) best all suspicion of sentimentality is purged by the red-hot heat of his poetic energy and poetic sincerity. Questions of taste and good form are supremely idle and irrelevant in the presence of such elemental creative processes as produced, for instance, the realistic myth poem of *Frost the Red-Nosed.* But Nekrasov's people was not only an object of compassion and worship. He could sympathize with their humour and their laughter as well as with their sufferings, and of all Russian poets of the nineteenth century he was the only one who was genuinely and creatively akin to the spirit of popular songs; he did not imitate it, he simply had in him the soul of a popular singer.

All Nekrasov's work may be divided into two sections: that in which he uses forms conditioned (though often only negatively conditioned) by the preceding development of literary poetry, and that in which he worked in a spirit of folk-song. It may be generally said that in the former he is subjective, in the latter objective and impersonal. The two aspects of Nekrasov are very different, but it is the combination of the two that makes his unique personality. On the whole the traditionally literary part of his work is much the more uneven of the two. Its lower strata merge in the absolutely inartistic and mechanical verse-mongery in which he engaged in the early forties, and which he never abandoned. Much of that which was particularly highly praised by his contemporaries for its civic and humanistic contents to-day seems rather a negative item in the legacy of Nekrasov. We find it difficult, for instance, to discover any merits in the uninspired and mechanical paraphrase of the memoirs of Princess Wolkonsky, wife of the Decembrist (*Russian Women*, 1867), a poem that was regarded by our elders as Nekrasov's masterpiece. On the other hand his ironic and satirical poems probably find more response in us than they did in our fathers and grandfathers. The biting and bilious, tersely concentrated sarcasm of such a condensed masterpiece as *The Thief* is enough to place Nekrasov in the front rank of the world's greatest satirists. And in most cases his poems of rhetorical invective have won from the action of time more than the lesser Ne-

krasov has lost. Personally, I think that such a poem as the elegy *Home* is one of the highest pinnacles of Russian poetry, and leaves most of the poetical invective of Lermontov simply nowhere. Another group of Nekrasov's poems that have won by the lapse of time are his love-lyrics—remarkably original in their unsweetened, unsentimental, poignantly passionate, and tragic accounts of a love that brings more pain than joy to both parties. Lastly, among his very earliest poems (1846) there is that veritably immortal poem which so many people (Grigoriev, among others, and Rozanov) have felt and experienced as something more than poetry, that poem of tragic love on the brink of starvation and moral degradation which begins "Whether I am driving in the night down a dark street" ("*Yedu li nochiu po ulitse tyomnoy*"). The same intensity is often present in the poems written during his last illness (*Last Songs*).

Of his objective and narrative poems *Sasha* (1854), which he was accused of plagiarizing from Turgenev's *Rudin* before its publication in his review, is an attempt at a problem story in verse and, though it contains some beautiful passages, compares very poorly with the novels of Turgenev. Much more interesting are the numerous chiefly short and dramatic narrative poems of peasant life. With one of these (*On the Way*, 1846) he began his career. The earliest of them have a distinct romantic tone (*The Gardener*). Among the most famous is *Vlas* (1854), one of those poems where Nekrasov gave proof of his sympathy not only with the people's sufferings, but also with its religious ideals. The most ambitious of his poems not in folk-song style is the majestic and statuesque *Frost the Red-Nosed* (1863), with its almost mythological idealization of the Russian peasant woman, and the grand pictures of the silent and frozen forest.

In his folk-song poetry Nekrasov transcends his *moi haïssable*, frees himself from his torturing obsessions of suffering, and becomes the poet of more than individual expression. This is already noticeable in the poem for children, especially in the delightful *General Toptygin* (where a performing bear is taken by a terrorized postmaster for an angry general). But it is

especially apparent in the most singing of all Nekrasov's poems, *The Pedlars* (1863), a story ultimately of tragic content, but told in a lusty and vigorous major key. The opening of the poem in particular has been appropriated by the people as a folk-song. It is perhaps the most genuinely popular snatch of song in the whole range of Russian literary poetry. A very different note is struck in the same poem by the weirdly effective *Song of the Wanderer*, one of the most powerful and purely original ever written by Nekrasov. It is one of those poems which are human because (in Synge's phrase, so often applicable to Nekrasov) they are brutal.

Nekrasov's greatest achievement in the folk-song style, and perhaps his greatest achievement altogether, is the vast, realistic satire *Who is Happy in Russia?* at which he worked in the seventies. The poem relates how seven peasants, to settle the question as to who lives happily in Russia, set out on foot to walk the round of the country. They meet representatives of various classes of society, the Squire, the Parson, the Peasant Woman, etc. They are told tales of extraordinary moral achievements, heroism, and crime, and the poem ends on a note of joyful confidence in the future of the people, with the help of the new democratic intelligentsia. The style is full of originality, wonderfully racy and vigorous. The poet never lets himself fall into his usual subjective lamentations, and conducts the story in a tone of keen and often good-humoured, shrewd satire, in a popular style, with frequent scenes of strong and simple realism, and occasionally a heroic note, when speaking of the virtues of the strong Russian peasant. Full of remarkable verbal expressiveness, vigour, and inventiveness, the poem is one of the most original productions of nineteenth-century Russian poetry.

11. THE UTTER DECLINE OF POETRY

The generation born between 1825 and 1850 was the most sterile in poetical gifts of all Russian generations. From 1860 to the end of the seventies there appeared no new poet of even tolerable mediocrity. The enemies of poetry, justified by the

fact, could feel victorious in their anti-æsthetic campaign. Both parties—the civic poets and the partisans of "pure art"—were equally poor. The latter, it is true, produced in Constantine Sluchevsky (1837–1904) a poet of real significance. But after a short first appearance in 1857–60, when he was greeted by discerning critics (including Grigoriev) as the best hope of Russian poetry, Sluchevsky, like Fet, disappeared from the scene for almost twenty years, not to reappear before the end of the seventies. He had a genuinely original vision of the world, the foundation of real genius, and he seemed the man to create a really new, really modern poetry, but his ill luck in falling on times of exceptionally low technical culture never allowed him to develop into anything better than a stammerer. His work belongs chiefly to the time after 1880 and I have spoken of him in greater detail in *Contemporary Russian Literature*.

The only other poet of the period worth mentioning is Dmitri Nikolaevich Sadóvnikov (1843–1883), a native of Simbirsk, who attempted to create a sort of local Volga poetry, of which the most famous example is the well-known, but now anonymous (for no one remembers the authorship) ballad of *Stenka Razin and the Persian Princess*.

In the absence of original poetry there developed in the sixties and seventies an enormous translating activity. Very severe to native poets, the extreme anti-æstheticians retained a degree of reverence for certain foreign reputations, specially for those which were in some way or other connected with revolution—Byron, Béranger, and Heine. Byron retained much of his old reputation—and was given lip-service even by Pisarev. And it is hardly an exaggeration to say that Béranger (in the translation of Vasili Kurochkin, 1831–1875) and Heine (in that of Michael Mickhaylov, 1826–1864, Plescheyev, and Weinberg 1830–1908) were more popular with the wide mass of the intellegentsia than any Russian poet.

12. THE DRAMA, GENERAL SURVEY; TURGENEV

Realism had a simpler and more unilinear development on the Russian stage than it had in the Russian novel. Its history

may be summed up in a few representative names in a way the parallel periods of fiction cannot. Its three phases are dominated, the first (roughly 1830–50) by a great actor, the second (1850–95) by a great playwright, the third (which falls outside the scope of the present volume) by a great producer. They are respectively Shchepkin, Ostrovsky, and Stanislavsky. Shchepkin was the pioneer of realistic acting. But his roots were deep in the classical tradition of universal human truths, and the realism he sought was not that of the particular, but of general human nature. His art was an art of psychological, not of social, types. The second phase of Russian scenic realism concentrated on social realism, on truth to the particular, on the least universal, and most individual, aspects of a given social *milieu*. It became "ethnographical" realism—or, to use the technical Russian term, the realism of *byt*, which means life considered in its local and temporal aspects.

This phase found its complete expression in the plays of Ostrovsky and in the acting of Prov Sadovsky (1818–1872), the personal friend of the dramatist. The first representation of a play by Ostrovsky (1853) inaugurated the new theatrical era, which lasted for half a century.

Ostrovsky gives his name and impress to the period. Like the contemporary novel, the drama in his hands tended to become a selected arrangement of slices of life, with the minimum of adaptation to scenic demands. The same tendency is apparent in the dramatic work of Turgenev, who at the beginning of his career hesitated for some time between devoting himself to drama and devoting himself to fiction. With the exception of Pisemsky, Turgenev of all the novelists is the most important as a playwright.* His plays belong to the years 1843–52. They are largely experimental gropings after an adequate personal form of expression. Several of them have been staged

* Of the other great novelists Saltykov wrote the comedy *The Death of Pazukhin*, which was staged by Stanislavsky in 1914. Tolstoy's plays belong to the period after 1880 except the (only recently published) delightful comedy *A Contaminated Family* (written 1863), a satire of the young generation of the time, and a masterpiece of dialogue and of character drawing.

and a few revived recently. The most stageable is *The Provincial Lady*, a delicately characterized light comedy (1851). The most interesting historically is *A Month in the Country* (1850), a psychological play on the time-honoured theme of the rivalry in love between a mature woman and a young girl, which in style and construction (absence of apparent action and complexity of inner psychological and atmospheric pattern) has an obvious foretaste of Chekhov.

13. OSTROVSKY

Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky was born in 1823 in Moscow, on the south side of the river, in the centre of the merchant residential quarter. His father was a government clerk, and afterwards a sort of lawyer whose practice was among the merchants of the South Side. The dramatist went to the University, but in 1843, after a row with the University authorities, went down and entered the government service as a clerk of the Commercial Court. There he remained till 1851, when he left the service. These eight years at the Commercial Court were an important addition to his early experiences at home of the Moscow merchant community, and served him well in his later knowledge of its *byt*. His first work was published in 1847. This was a fragment of a comedy, *The Bankrupt*, which was completed in 1849. The play read out at various houses in Moscow produced a tremendous impression. Ostrovsky was now the centre of that set of enthusiasts of Russian character and of wild living. This wild living undid Grigoriev and other men of not so tough a grain, but a certain robust common sense was the principal characteristic of Ostrovsky; he always remained the level-headed worker he was by nature.

The first of his plays to be represented was *The Poor Bride*, in 1853. After that and till his death, in 1886, no year passed without a new, original play of his appearing on the stage of the imperial theatres. The height of his popularity was reached simultaneously with that of Turgenev, Goncharov, and Pisemsky in the years 1856–60. After the latter date Ostrovsky's popularity, though it did not decline, came to a standstill, and

critics and public began to insist on the superiority of his earlier to his new plays. His private life was quite uneventful, for all his energies were devoted to the theatre. In 1885 Ostrovsky was appointed part-director of the Moscow Imperial Theatres and director of the dramatic school attached to them. He died in the following year (1886).

Between 1847 and 1886 Ostrovsky wrote about forty plays in prose * besides eight in blank verse. They are of unequal merit, but, taken as a whole, doubtless the most remarkable body of dramatic work in Russian. Griboyedov and Gogol had written great and original plays, and each of them is a man of greater genius than Ostrovsky, but it was left to Ostrovsky to create a school of Russian drama, a Russian theatre, that may be put by the side of the national theatres of the West, if not on equal, at least on comparable terms. The limitations of Ostrovsky's art are obvious. His plays (with few exceptions) are neither tragedies nor comedies, but belong to the middle and bastard kind of drama. The dramatic skeleton in most of them, sacrificed to the exigencies of the slice-of-life method, lacks the firm consistency of classical art. With few exceptions his plays are devoid of poetry, and even where poetry is present, as it is in *The Thunder-storm*, it is a poetry of atmosphere, not of words and texture. Though an admirable master of individualized and typical dialogue, Ostrovsky is not a master of language in the sense Gogol, Leskov, or (to use an English instance) Synge was. His language is purely representational; he uses it truthfully, but uncreatively. His very raciness of the Russian soil is in a certain sense a limitation, for his plays are always narrowly native and have not universal significance. Were it not for this limitation, and had he been universal in his nationality, Ostrovsky's place would have been among the greatest. The breadth, the grasp, the variety of Ostrovsky's vision of Russian life, are almost infinite. He is the least subjective of Russian writers. His would be a hopeless case for the psychoanalyst. His characters are not in any sense emanations of himself. They are genuine reflections of "the other."

* Among other things he translated *The Taming of the Shrew* and the interludes of Cervantes.

He is no psychologist, his characters are not, as Tolstoy's are, inner worlds to which we are introduced by a supreme power of intuition; they are just people as seen by other people. But this superficial realism is not the external, pictorial realism of Gogol and Goncharov, but a truly dramatic realism, for it gives the characters in their relations to the other characters, which is the simplest and oldest way of narrative and dramatic characterization by speech and action, only enriched by an enormous wealth of social, ethnographic detail. And in spite of this superficiality they have the individuality and the uniqueness we recognize in our fellow-creatures, even without getting under their skull.

These general remarks on the art of Ostrovsky refer chiefly to his early and most characteristic work, up to about 1861. The subject-matter of these plays is taken for the most part from the life of the Moscow and provincial merchants, and of the lower strata of the official world. The vast and varied picture of the conservative and un-Europeanized life of the Russian merchants was what struck his contemporaries most strongly in the work of Ostrovsky, for the reality underlying literary creation interested them more than the art that transformed it. The critics of the fifties spilt endless ink over the elucidation of Ostrovsky's attitude towards the conservative mainstays of the merchant class. He himself gave disconcertingly abundant food for such discussions and for every kind of interpretation, for his artistic sympathy is distributed in different ways in different plays. Every interpretation, from the most enthusiastic idealization of stolid conservatism and patriarchal despotism to the fierce denunciation of the merchants as an unredeemed kingdom of darkness, could find a peg to hang on in the text of the plays. As for Ostrovsky's own attitude, it was simply unstable, or, to be more exact, the moral and social attitude was a secondary thing to him. His task was to build plays out of the elements of reality as he saw it. An attitude of sympathy or antipathy was to him entirely a matter of dramatic expediency, of pure technique, for, though an "anti-artificial" realist, he felt very keenly the inner laws along which, and not along those of life, he had to construct each

play. So his moral judgment over the tyrannical merchant paterfamilias depended on his dramatic function in the particular play. Apart from this it is extraordinarily difficult to extract a social and political *Weltanschauung* out of Ostrovsky. He was the most objective and detached of writers, and the interpretation given his plays by his friend and prophet Grigoriev, as the product of boundless enthusiasm for the organic forces of undefiled national life, is after all as alien to the real Ostrovsky as the anti-traditional and revolutionary propaganda extracted out of them by Dobrolyubov.

Technically speaking, the most interesting of all Ostrovsky's plays are the first two, *The Bankrupt* (written 1847–9, published under the title *Among Friends One Always Comes to Terms* in 1850) and *The Poor Bride* (published 1852, acted 1853). The former was as striking and sensational a beginning for a young author as there is on record in Russian literary history. Gogol in *Marriage* had given an example of a characteristic painting of the merchant *milieu*. In particular the character of the professional matchmaker practising among the merchants was already abundantly exploited. In the inclusion of none but unsympathetic characters also Ostrovsky followed the example of Gogol in *Revizor*. But here he went one better and discarded the most time-honoured of all traditions of comedy—the poetic justice that punishes vice. The triumph of vice and precisely of the most unredeemed of all the characters in the play gives Ostrovsky's play its particular note of bold originality. It was this that incensed even such an old realist as Shchepkin, who thought the play cynical and dirty. The realism of Ostrovsky, in spite of the obvious influence of Gogol, is in substance of an opposite nature to Gogol's. It is free from all expressiveness for the sake of expressiveness; it keeps clear of caricature and farce; it is based on a solid, intimate, first-hand knowledge of the life described. The dialogue aims at truthfulness to life, not at verbal richness. The art of using realistic speech without producing the effect of grotesqueness and without obtruding it is a characteristic art of the Russian realists, but it reaches its perfection in Ostrovsky. Finally the untheatrical construction is

entirely un-Gogolian, and in the deliberate discarding of all tricks and contrivances at scenic effect Ostrovsky from the outset attains his best. The mainstay of the play is the characters, and the plot is entirely a result of the characters. But the characters are taken in their social aspect. They are not men and women in general, but Moscow merchants and assistants, and cannot be torn away from the social setting.

In *The Bankrupt* Ostrovsky attained almost immediately to the full measure of his technical originality. Only in his second play did he go further in the direction of detheatricalizing his theatre. *The Poor Bride* is entirely different in tone and atmosphere from *The Bankrupt*. The *milieu* is not merchants, but minor officials. The unpleasantness of it is redeemed by the character of the heroine, a strong girl, in no way inferior to and more actively alive than the heroines of Turgenev. She ends characteristically after being let down by her romantic, ideal admirer, in submitting to her fate and marrying the successful brute Benevolensky, who can alone save her mother from imminent ruin. All the characters are masterpieces, and Ostrovsky's skill at building the action entirely on the characters is at its best. But what is especially remarkable is the last act—a bold technical novelty. The play ends on a mass scene, where the crowd discusses the marriage of Benevolensky and where a wonderfully new note is introduced by the appearance in the crowd of his former mistress. The delicacy and pregnancy of these last scenes, in which the heroes hardly appear, was really a new word in dramatic art. Ostrovsky's power of creating atmospheric poetry is revealed for the first time in this fifth act of *The Poor Bride*. In *Poverty is No Crime* (1854) Ostrovsky went still further in detheatricalizing the theatre, but with less intrinsic success. The immediate success of the play was great, owing to the original and Slavophil character of the noble drunkard, the ruined merchant, Lyubim Tortsov, who has remained one of the most popular parts in the Russian repertory. But as a play it is much less satisfactory and the "sliciness" of the technique inclines to mere looseness. His other Slavophil play, *Know Your Place* (*Ne v svoi sani ne sadis*, 1853), in which the conservative

patriarchalism of the merchant father is made to triumph over the romantic levity of the "educated" lover, is much more constructive and economical and less rich in atmosphere. The same classical manner of construction is further affirmed in the powerful drama *Live Not as You Like, but as God Wills* (1855). But even in these tenser and more "unilinear" plays Ostrovsky never loses his wealth of *byt* painting and never condescends to artificial devices.

Of the plays written in 1856–61 *The Profitable Post* (1857), a satire on the corrupt higher bureaucracy, had an enormous success as a response to a burning problem, but is of comparatively inferior merit. *The Ward* (1860) is one of his most unpleasant plays, where he attains almost intolerable power in the painting of a character that often reappears in his later work—the selfish, rich, and self-righteous old woman. The three short comedies united by the character of the silly and conceited young clerk Balzaminov (1858–61) are his masterpieces in the comic kind, for the characters of Balzaminov and of his mother, fondly doting and yet fully conscious of her son's extreme silliness, and for the saturated painting of their social environment. In another comedy of the same period (*V chuzhom piru pokhmelie,* 1856) Ostrovsky concentrated into the character of the merchant Kit Kitych all the essence of the *samodur*—the wilful domestic tyrant decided to make everyone do "what my left toe wishes"—but easily bulliable.

By far the most significant work of this period, and ultimately the masterpiece of Ostrovsky, is *The Thunder-storm* (1860). It is the most famous of his plays and has been most abundantly written about. Dobrolyubov took it as the text for one of his most effective and influential sermons against the dark forces of conservatism and tradition, and Grigoriev saw in it the highest expression of Ostrovsky's love for the traditional life and character of the undefiled Russian middle classes. In reality it is a purely poetical work, a purely atmospheric creation, a great poem of love and death, of freedom and thraldom. It is intensely local and Russian, and the saturation of the atmosphere with the very essence of Russian *byt* and Russian poetical feeling makes it hardly understandable

to a foreigner. For every detail of it is intensified by the background of a whole emotional tradition (expressed perhaps best of all in the lyrical songs of the Russian people), and without this background it loses most of its appeal. *The Thunder-storm* is a rare example of a supreme masterpiece built of exclusively national material.

After 1861 Ostrovsky sought new ways. He devoted himself at one time to historical plays (see section 15), and in his prose plays he departed from much of his original novelty. He almost abandoned the merchant *milieu*, which under the influence of the Reforms and of the spread of education was rapidly transforming into a drabber middle class, and he more and more submitted to the traditional method of play making, never, however, condescending to use the mere artificial and improbable tricks of the French school. Owing to his example, Russia, unlike most other countries, succeeded in keeping clear from the all-pervading school of Scribe and Sardou. Still there is more intrigue and plot in most of his later than in his early plays, and though the critics as a rule disapproved of them, some later plays of Ostrovsky (*Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man*, 1868; *The Forest*, 1871; *Wolves and Sheep*, 1877) proved even greater favourites with the public than his more characteristic early masterpieces. The first two are distinctly among his best work, and *The Forest* shares with *The Thunder-storm* the honour of being regarded as his masterpiece. Less exclusively original, the comedy is extraordinarily rich in its character drawing. The principal characters are two wandering actors, the tragedian Neschastlivtsev and the comedian Schastlivtsev, a Don Quixote and a Sancho Panza. They are almost as rich in variety and suggestiveness as the great creations of Cervantes. Of all Ostrovsky's plays it is the one in which the essential nobility of man is most triumphantly asserted in the moral, though not financial victory of the Quixotic tragedian. But it also contains, in the person of Mme Gurmyzhsky, the rich and callous widow, and of her young lover, Bulanov, the most unsweetened types of cynical and complacent meanness and selfishness in the whole of Russian literature.

Ostrovsky never stood still and always sought for new ways

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and methods. In his later plays (*The Dowerless Girl*, 1880) he attempted a more psychological method of character drawing. But on the whole his later plays mark a certain drying-up of his creative sources. At the time of his death he dominated the Russian stage by the mass of his work. But the successors he left were minor and uncreative men, who were only capable of writing plays with "grateful parts" for the excellent actors and actresses brought up in the school of Shchepkin and of Ostrovsky, but not of carrying on a vital tradition of literary drama.

14. SUKHOVO-KOBYLIN, PISEMSKY, AND MINOR DRAMATISTS

The only two contemporary dramatists who come at all near to Ostrovsky, if not for the quantity, at least from the quality of their work, were Sukhovo-Kobylin and Pisemsky, both of whom are more traditional, more "artificial" and more theatrical than he.

Alexander Vasilievich Sukhovó-Kobýlin (1817–1903) was a typical educated nobleman of his generation, soaked in Hegel and in German idealism. He considered metaphysics his true vocation, translated the whole of Hegel into Russian, and worked for many years at an original philosophical treatise in the spirit of Hegelianism. But his manuscripts were destroyed in a fire, and there remains no printed trace of his metaphyhical labours. Playwrighting was only a short episode in his life. The wonderful thing is that neither his metaphysical bent nor the unprofessionality of his playwrighting has left any impress on his plays. They are curiously free from ideas, and as for sheer stage-craft they have no rivals in Russian literary drama. The one important event in Sukhovo-Kobylin's life was the murder in 1850 of his mistress, a Frenchwoman to whom he was profoundly attached. He was suspected of being guilty of the crime, and for seven years he was under trial (at one time in prison); only in 1857 was he finally acquitted. The episode, which brought him face to face with the horror and ineptitude of the pre-Reform law-courts, left a profound trace in him, and filled him with that bitter hatred

for all the official class which informs his two later plays. All his work consists of only three comedies. *The Wedding of Krechinsky* (acted 1855), *The Affair*, and *The Death of Tarelkin*. The latter two appeared in print in 1869, but were prohibited for the stage till much later. *The Wedding of Krechinsky* is a pure comedy of picaresque intrigue, in which the rogue triumphs over the stupidity of the virtuous characters. The critics found it lacking in ideas, and too dependent on plot, too French in style. But the public made it a tremendous success, and it became one of the favourite and securest plays of the Russian repertory. For general familiarity with the text it rivals *Gore ot Uma* and *Revizor*. Quotations from it are still in everyone's mouth. As a comedy of intrigue it has no rivals in Russian except *Revizor*, and the characters of the two principal rogues, Krechinsky and Rasplyuyev, are among the most memorable in the whole gallery of Russian literature.

The Affair and *The Death of Tarelkin* are very different in tone. They are satires which, in the author's own phrase, are calculated not to make the audience laugh, but shudder. The savage bitterness of the satire is such that by their side Saltykov seems harmless. They were too much even for the radicals of the sixties. Sukhovo-Kobylin used in them methods of grotesque exaggeration and improbable caricature in the way Gogol had used them, but much more fearlessly and savagely—methods that were profoundly alien to the spirit of Russian realism. In our own time, when we have overcome the convention of likeness to life, we are in a better position to appreciate the satire of Sukhovo-Kobylin. *The Death of Tarelkin*, with its huge cynicism and cruelty in the painting of triumphant and shameless vice, has of late had a considerable success. It is a thing unique in its way, combining, as it were, the wisely calculated cruelty of Ben Jonson with the passionately serious rage of Swift.

Pisemsky began his dramatic career with comedies (*The Hypochondriac*, 1852), where he abundantly availed himself of the Gogolian tradition of farce and obvious incongruity. But his greatest achievement was in realistic tragedy. This *genre* is represented in Russian literature by practically only

two plays—Pisemsky's *A Hard Lot* (*Gor'kaya Sudbina*, 1860), and Tolstoy's *Powers of Darkness*. For all the intensity and power of the latter play, an unprejudiced critical judgment can hardly fail to conclude that, if the two are equal in human and tragic significance, Pisemsky's is the greater play, the completer artistic success. It has the tensity and inevitability of the classical drama, and while *Powers of Darkness* is best of all defined as a morality play, *A Hard Lot* is a genuine tragedy with that supreme logical unity which is the great characteristic of the plays of Racine. The subject, like those of Racine, is simple, almost geometrical. A squire, a weakling of the Hamlet, idealist type has seduced in the absence of her husband the wife of one of his serfs. The husband is a strong character of the type that occurs in Pisemsky's and Leskov's popular stories. Though a serf, he is a prosperous tradesman and has made money in Petersburg. He returns home (this is the initial situation) and by degrees discovers the guilt of his wife and reacts accordingly. The squire is the master of the husband, while the husband is the master of his wife—so it is a conflict between, on the one hand, the squire's rights as a serf-owner and the dignity of his serf; on the other, between the rights of free love (an essential point is that the squire and the serf's wife do love each other) and the rights of the master of the house over his wife. The double conflict is unfolded with supreme mastery, and the spectator's sympathy is held in balance between the rights of human dignity and the rights of free love. The tragedy ends in the husband's killing his wife and then (a trait particularly praised by Russian critics, but suggested to Pisemsky by the actor Martynov) delivering himself into the hand of the law.

Pisemsky's later plays do not come up to the high standard of *A Hard Lot*. They are crude and, as it were, obviously against the grain of all that the public of the time valued. They consist of two cycles—a series of historical melodramas of the eighteenth century (*Usurpers of Law*, *Lieutenant Gladkov*) and a series of dramas satirizing the money-making frenzy of the sixties and seventies (*Baal*, *Beasts of Prey*, etc.). The former are tantalizing and strange creations. Their dramatic

manner is terse, almost sketchy. They are full (especially *Usurpers*) of rapid and melodramatic incident. The dramatist seems wilfully to avoid the finer touch and gives an almost puppet-theatre psychology. Yet these plays have a strange fascination, and if revived on the stage should prove extraordinarily effective. The absence of psychological profundity and the deliberate utilization of powerful effects would be much more appreciated to-day than when they were first produced.

The satirical plays of contemporary life are akin to Sukhovo-Kobylin's in the savageness of their satire. But they are long and technically imperfect, and show a distinct decline of the writer's creatives forces.

The numerous minor dramatists of the period partly endeavoured to assimilate Ostrovsky's methods in the portrayal of Russian *byt*, partly wrote what were called "plays of exposure"; that is to say, dramatic denunciations of various official and social vices, especially of pre-Reform conditions. Here also the lead had been given by Ostrovsky in *A Profitable Post*. There is no necessity in doing more than barely mentioning the names of some of the most popular of these playwrights, none of whom is above mediocrity.

The real rival, in the public favour, of the literary realistic drama of Ostrovsky was the operetta of Offenbach, which in the latter half of the sixties flooded the Russian stage and relegated into a comparative unpopularity all other forms of dramatic art. But it remained a purely imported commodity, and no attempt was made by Russian authors to imitate it.

15. THE COSTUME PLAY

By the end of the forties the pseudo-romantic drama of Kukolnik and his like had lost all credit. It was not till some ten years later that there began a new movement to revive the verse drama. Its starting-point was the example of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. The first to begin the movement was the poet Mey, whose *Maid of Pskov* (1860), a conventionally pretty drama of the times of Ivan the Terrible, started a continuous series of plays in blank verse on subjects of Russian history.

Like Pushkin in *Boris Godunov*, the dramatists of this school honestly tried to be historical, and to give genuine reconstructions of the past as they saw it. Their plays are based as a rule on sound knowledge and an industrious study of the period selected, a study that was facilitated by the great achievements of Russian historians in the middle decades of the century. The subjects of the plays were chosen from Old Russian history before the time of Peter the Great, chiefly from the Moscow period. In spite of the solid historical knowledge at the basis of most of these plays they are, as a whole, remarkably lacking in Old Russian flavour. Old Russia was to the authors, and still more to the public, above all a land of picturesque and luxurious "boyar costumes." Its life was seen through the prism of the European romantic drama, and the motive of romantic love, so alien to the spirit of real Muscovy, was almost inevitably introduced into every play. The great drawback of all these plays is their language (which is the conventional language of contemporary poetry larded with idioms from old documents and from folk-lore) and especially their metre—blank verse. Besides the technical laxity common to the verse writers of the period, which showed more apparently in a rhymeless metre and in the hands of men who (like Ostrovsky) learned the craft of versification at the age of forty, Russian blank verse, even in Pushkin's hand, has always been the least Russian of metres, and is always suggestive of translation; the only really effective romantic blank verse in the language is Pushkin's in the Little Tragedies, which all deal with subjects from foreign life.* The use of it in dramas of Muscovite life is particularly inappropriate. Lastly, the example of *Boris Godunov* and of the common model, the histories of Shakspere, is responsible for the excess detail and the overcrowding of the stage with secondary personages. Altogether the school as a whole must be regarded as unsatisfactory and one of the least original and least significant of Russian literary developments.

* And, it is true, in *Rusalka,* but *Rusalka* is in the exact sense of the word unique, a miracle and no example; besides the Russian element in *Rusalka* is not Muscovite, and is, as it were, universalized.

This is not to say that the plays of its best representatives are devoid of merit. Ostrovsky's chronicles (1862–8) are distinctly the poorest part of all his work, though *historically* they are often interesting and suggestive. His inability to select in the material provided by history and the flatness of his verse make them very poor reading. Better than the rest is the invented *Voyevoda* (1865; recast as *A Dream on the Volga*, 1885). It is distinctly good as an acting play, but the language and the verse are, again, poor. Infinitely better is *The Snow Maiden* (*Snegurochka*), which is the only really poetical romantic comedy in the language. Based on somewhat naïvely interpreted mythological material, it is full of that atmospheric poetry of which Ostrovsky gave such a masterpiece in *The Thunder-storm*. But in *The Snow Maiden* the nature poetry is all transfused with a delicate humour, owing to which even the very ineffective blank verse of Ostrovsky loses much of its inadequacy. And in the songs he finally transcended all his limitations and unexpectedly created genuinely folk-lore-like poetry that can almost be compared with Nekrasov's.

Alexey Tolstoy is superior to Ostrovsky as an historical dramatist. Though all the strictures on the school in general apply to him as well, and though his dramatic blank verse is very far from being on a level with his rhymed lyrical, narrative, and humorous verse, his famous historical trilogy (*The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, 1866; *Tsar Theodore*, 1868; and *Tsar Boris*, 1870) deserves to a certain extent its high reputation. The plays are, intellectually, *interesting* and suggestive. They are full of excellent character drawing. In most cases it is, perhaps, intelligent and shrewd rather than genuinely imaginative. But in the character of Tsar Theodore Alexey Tolstoy succeeded in giving one of the most interesting figures in Russian literature—the good and weak sovereign, with an unerring sense of values and a complete inability to impose his goodwill on his crafty councillor.

Of the other historical dramatists I will only mention Dmitri Vasilievich Avérkiev (1836–1905), who went further than the rest in the meretricious larding of blank verse with folk-lore

and Muscovite idiom and represented old Muscovy as a Slavophil paradise.

The principal interest of all this drama is its connexion with the far more vigorous growth of the Russian opera. Rimsky-Korsakov's librettist, Belsky, was one of its best writers, and above all it can claim kinship with the greatest Russian tragic poet of the period, Modest Musorgsky. Musorgsky himself wrote the libretto of *Khovanschina* and adapted with great skill Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* to make his popular drama. That he had dramatic as well as musical genius cannot be denied, but the literary historian unfortunately has no right of appropriating him, or of severing the dramatic from the musical texture of his dramas. The *spirit* of Musorgsky was very different from that of his contemporary dramatists, and his real spiritual kin in literature were Nekrasov and Dostoyevsky.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGE OF REALISM: THE NOVELISTS (II)

1. TOLSTOY (BEFORE 1880)

TWENTY years ago there was no difference of opinion outside Russia as to who was the greatest of Russian writers—Tolstoy dominated Russian literature in a way that no writer had dominated a national literature in the eyes of the world since the death of Goethe, or even, if we think of the enormous extra-literary prestige of Tolstoy, since the days of Voltaire. Since then the wheel of fashion, or the laws of growth of the occidental mind, has displaced Tolstoy from his place of ascendancy, and substituted for his the idols of Dostoyevsky and, in these last years (strangest of occidental whims), of Chekhov. It is left to the future to show whether the wheel will turn again, or whether the advanced *élite* of the Western world has definitely reached a stage of mental senility that can only be satisfied by the autumnal genius of Chekhov.

For his own compatriots Tolstoy, though often preferred to all other writers, never was the centre or the symbol of Russian literature as a whole—a part irrevertibly belonging to Pushkin. The enormous moral and personal prestige he enjoyed in the last twenty-five years of his life was not inevitably linked with a recognition of his absolute literary supremacy. But the permanence of Tolstoy has never been put to question, and as far as we can see ahead, never will be. To compare him to Chekhov is as impossible to a level-headed Russian as it is to say that Brussels is a bigger city than London. The actuality, the influence, of Tolstoy may have its ebb and flow; we may (as we happen to do to-day) find nothing we should like ourselves to imitate in *War and Peace;* but the star of Tolstoy will never

be eclipsed by any other body. Humanly speaking, it is impossible to deny that he was the biggest man (not the best, nor perhaps even the greatest, but just morally the bulkiest) that trod the Russian soil within the last few lifetimes; the biggest man, if not the greatest artist, in all Russian literary history.

The bigness of Tolstoy has seemed to me sufficient to justify a procedure that would have been disastrously unfair to anyone of lesser bulk: I have cut him in two between this and its companion volume, and the reader will find an account of his work after 1880 in my *Contemporary Russian Literature*. If I were mainly concerned with Tolstoy the man, this halving him between two volumes would be unjustifiable—the essential unity of the young and the old Tolstoy is an all-important point to every student of his personality and, especially, of his ideas. But literary history is concerned with literature, which is a supra-personal growth and in which biography and psychology are matters of secondary importance as compared to the supra-personal evolution of a nation's literature as a whole, and of its component parts, the evolutions of the individual *genres*. It so happens that Tolstoy's conversion, about 1880, to the religion of his later years coincided with a profound change in his artistic views and aims that was partly conditioned by that conversion, but was also an independent literary development with a definite place of its own in the general evolution of Russian literature, and was almost a negation of the whole achievement of the realistic school. In this volume I am concerned only with that of Tolstoy's work in which he is a typical, even an extreme (if in certain points eccentric) representative of the main tendencies of the Russian realistic school, its finest flower and highest æsthetic justification.

Count Leo (in Russian, Lev, pronounced Lyof) Nikolaevich Tolstóy was born on 28th August 1828, on his father's estate of Yasnaya Polyana, in the Province of Tula. The Tolstoys are a family of old Russian nobility (their German descent is an absolutely gratuitous fiction of a seventeenth-century genealogist), one of whom, Peter the Great's Chief of the Secret Police, was created a count. Tolstoy's mother was born a Princess Wolkonsky. His father and mother are respectively the

starting-points for the characters of Nicholas Rostov and Princess Marya in *War and Peace*. They belonged to the best Russian nobility, and this fact of belonging by birth to the upper layer of the ruling class marks Tolstoy very distinctly off from the other writers of his time. He always remained a class-conscious nobleman (even when this class-consciousness became purely negative) and kept aloof from the intelligentsia.

Tolstoy's childhood and boyhood were passed between Moscow and Yasnaya Polyana, in a large family of several brothers. He has left us an extraordinarily vivid record of his early human environment, of the relatives and servants that surrounded him, in the wonderful autobiographical notes he wrote for his biographer P. I. Biryukov. He lost his mother when he was two and his father when he was nine. His subsequent education was in the hands of his aunt (a term that in Russia includes all collateral female relatives of an elder generation), Mlle Ergolsky, who is supposed to be the starting-point for Sonya in *War and Peace*. In 1844 Tolstoy matriculated at the University of Kazan, where he studied first oriental languages and afterwards law, but which he left in 1847 without taking a degree. In 1849 he settled down at Yasnaya Polyana, where he attempted to be useful to his peasants, but soon discovered the ineffectiveness of his uninformed zeal. Much of the life he led at the University and after leaving it was of a kind usual with young men of his class, irregular and full of pleasure seeking—wine, cards, and women—not entirely unlike the life led by Pushkin before his exile to the south. But Tolstoy was incapable of that light-hearted acceptance of life as it came. From the very beginning his diary (which is extant from 1847) reveals an insatiate thirst for a rational and moral justification of life, a thirst that for ever remained the ruling force of his mind. The same diary was his first experiment in forging that technique of psychological analysis that was to become his principal literary weapon. To the year 1851 belongs his first attempt at a more ambitious and more definitely creative kind of writing.

In the same year, sick of his empty and useless life in Moscow, he went off to the Caucasus, where he joined an artillery

unit garrisoned in the Cossack country on the Terek, as a *junker*—that is to say, a volunteer of private rank, but of noble birth. In the following year (1852) he completed his first story (*Childhood*) and sent it to Nekrasov for publication in the *Sovremennik*. Nekrasov immediately accepted and wrote to Tolstoy in very encouraging terms. The story had a considerable and immediate success and gave Tolstoy a definite place in literature.

In his battery Tolstoy lived the rather easy and unoccupied life of a *junker* of means, in agreeable billets. He had much spare time, and most of it was spent in hunting. In the little fighting he saw, he did very well. In 1854 he received his commission, and was, at his request, transferred to the army operating against the Turks in Wallachia, where he took part in the siege of Silistria. In the autumn of the same year he joined the garrison of Sevastopol. There he saw very serious fighting. He took part in the defence of the famous Fourth Bastion and in the battle of Chernaya Rechka, the bad management of which he satirized in a humorous song, the only piece of verse he is known to have written. In Sevastopol he wrote his famous *Sevastopol Stories*, which, appearing as they did in the *Sovremennik* while the siege was still on, greatly increased the general interest in their author. Soon after the abandonment of the fortress Tolstoy went on leave of absence to Petersburg and Moscow, and the following year he left the army.

These years after the Crimean War were the only time in Tolstoy's life when he mixed with the literary world. He was welcomed by the *littérateurs* of Petersburg and Moscow as one of their most eminent fellow craftsmen. As he confessed afterwards, his vanity and pride were greatly flattered by his success. But he did not get on with them. He was too much of an aristocrat to like this semi-Bohemian intelligentsia. They were too self-consciously plebeian for him, while they resented the way he obviously preferred "society" to their company. Cutting epigrams on this subject passed between him and Turgenev. On the other hand, all the structure of his mind was against the grain of the progressive westernizers. The way they stated their problems was uninteresting to him. He did not believe in

progress or in culture. His lack of sympathy with the literary world was increased by their disappointment in his new work. All he had written since *Childhood* had shown no advance from the point of view of artistic perfection, and his critics failed to realize the experimental value of this imperfect work. All this made his connexion with the literary world shortlived. It culminated in a resounding quarrel with Turgenev (1861), whom he called out and afterwards apologized to for so doing. The whole story is very characteristic and revelatory of his character, with its profound and sensitive self-consciousness and impatience of other people's assumed superiority. The only writers he remained friends with were the reactionary and "landlordist" Fet (in whose house the quarrel with Turgenev took place) and the democratic Slavophil Strakhov, both of them men entirely out of tune with the main current of contemporary progressive thought.

The years 1856–61 were passed by Tolstoy between Petersburg, Moscow, and Yasnaya, and foreign countries. In 1857 (and again in 1860–1) he travelled abroad, and returned disgusted by the selfishness and materialism of European *bourgeois* civilization. In 1859 he started a school for peasant children at Yasnaya and in 1862 published a pedagogical magazine, *Yasnaya Polyana*, in which he astonished the progressive world by contending that it was not the intellectuals who should teach the peasants, but rather the peasants the intellectuals. In 1861 he accepted the post of Arbiter of the Peace, a magistrature that had been introduced to supervise the carrying into life of the Emancipation Act. Meanwhile his insatiate quest for moral stability continued to torment him. He had now abandoned the wild living of his youth and thought of marrying. In 1856 he made his first unsuccessful attempt to marry (Mlle Arsenieva). In 1860 he was profoundly affected by the death of his brother Nicholas, which was for him the first encounter with the inevitable reality of death. In 1862, at last, after long hesitations (he was convinced that since he was old—thirty-four!—and ugly no woman could love him) he proposed to Sophie Andreyevna Behrs and was accepted. They were married in the September of the same year.

His marriage is one of the two most important landmarks in the life of Tolstoy, the other being his conversion. He was always dominated by one preoccupation—how to justify his life before his conscience and thus attain a stable moral welfare. In his bachelor years he oscillated between two opposite desires. One was a passionate and hopeless aspiration after that whole and unreflecting "natural" state which he found among the peasants and especially among the Cossacks in whose villages he had lived in the Caucasus, a state that has no need to justify life because it is free from the consciousness that demands such a justification. He tried to find such an unquestioning state in a deliberate surrender to the animal impulses, in living the life of his friends and (here he was nearest to attaining it) in his favourite occupation of hunting. But he seemed incapable of finding it for good, and the other equally passionate desire, to find a rational justification of life, tore him away every time he hoped he had attained the goal of self-satisfaction. His marriage was for him the gate towards a more stable and lasting "natural state." It was a self-justification of life and a solution of the racking problem. Family life and an unreasoning acceptance of and submission to the life he was born to now became his religion.

For the first fifteen years of his married life he lived in this blissful state of confidently satisfied vegetable life, with his conscience appeased and his need of rational and ultimate justification silenced. The philosophy of this vegetable conservatism is expressed with supreme creative power in *War and Peace*. In his family life he was exceptionally and shamelessly happy. Sophie Andreyevna, almost a girl when he married her, he easily moulded into the form he desired and informed her with his new philosophy, of which, to the later undoing of the household, she became the impregnable rock and unalterable depository. She proved an ideal wife and mother and mistress of the house. She was, moreover, a devoted help to her husband in his literary work, and the story is well known how she copied out *War and Peace* seven times from beginning to end. She bore Tolstoy numerous sons and daughters. She had no personal life; it was all merged in the life of the family. The

family fortune, owing to Tolstoy's efficient management of his estates (Yasnaya was merely a residence; the principal income came from a vast farming estate beyond the Volga) and to the sales of his works, was prosperous, making it possible adequately to provide for the increasing family. But Tolstoy, though absorbed and largely satisfied by his self-justified life, though glorifying it with unsurpassed imaginative power in his greatest novel, was not capable of being merged in family life as his wife had become merged. Nor could his "life in art" absorb him as it did his fellow craftsmen. The worm of moral thirst, reduced at one time to negligible proportions, could never die. Tolstoy was constantly agitated by moral problems and moral urges. In 1866 he was counsel (unsuccessfully) before a court-martial for a soldier accused of striking an officer. In 1873 he published articles on popular education which enabled that shrewd critic Mikhaylovsky practically to predict the later developments of his ideas. *Anna Karenina*, written in 1874–6, is appreciably less "vegetable" and more moralistic than *War and Peace*. While he was writing that second novel, the crisis overcame him that led to his conversion. It is described with a power that makes it comparable to the Bible in *A Confession*. It was caused by a growing obsession of the reality of death, which again brought forward the unquenchable thirst and need for ultimate justification. At first it led Tolstoy to the Orthodox Church. But his all-pervading rationalism could not acquiesce with the dogmas and rites of Orthodox Christianity and led him on to a purely rational religion that accepted only the moral without the theological and mystical doctrines of Christianity, and which became at last that final justification for which his spirit had yearned. The great rationalist had revolted against his self-accepted submission to the irrational forces of "life as it comes," and had at last found himself a dogma that was to guide him henceforward. In 1879 the process was at an end, and in that year he wrote *A Confession*. It was only a few years later that it began to take shape in his conduct. Only in 1884, largely under the influence of Chertkov, Tolstoy began an active propaganda for his new religion. I have attempted to give an outline of it

in *Contemporary Russian Literature*. In his personal life his conversion led to an estrangement from his wife, whom he had once moulded in his own way, but whom he was this time unable to remould nearer to his heart's changed desire. The story of his later years falls outside the scope of this volume. Its outline is widely and generally known, as are the circumstances of his death on 8th November 1910.

Tolstoy's "conversion" coincided with an important change in the style and manner of his imaginative writings. He discarded the methods he had used in his earlier work, the dissecting analysis of the subconscious and semi-conscious workings of the human mind, and all that which he later on (in *What is Art?*) condemned as "superfluous detail." In his early work he was a representative man of the Russian realistic school, which relied entirely on the method of "superfluous detail" that had been introduced by Gogol. It was "superfluous" detail that gave that particular and individual convincingness that is the very essence of the realistic novel. The general effect of such detail is to bring out the particular, the individual, the local, and the temporary at the expense of the general and the universal. At its logical term it produced the purely ethnographical *byt* realism of Ostrovsky. This particularity which excludes a universal appeal and emphasizes social and national differences was what the old Tolstoy condemned in the methods of realistic fiction. In his early work he had entirely adopted them and carried them farther than his predecessors. In physical description of character he outdid Gogol and has never been surpassed. But he is different from his compeers in that he never inclined towards *byt*. The interest of his work is always psychological, never ethnographical. The kind of detail he selected was different from the kind selected, say, by Ostrovsky. The essence of Tolstoy's early art was to push analysis to its furthest limit; hence it is that the details he offers are not complex cultural facts, but, as it were, *atoms* of experience, the indivisible units of immediate perception. An important form of this dissecting and atomizing method (and one which survived all the changes of his style) is what Victor Shklovsky has called "making it strange" (*ostrannenie*). It consists in

never calling complex things by their accepted name, but always disintegrating a complex action or object into its indivisible components; in describing, not naming it. The method strips the world of the labels attached to it by habit and by social convention and gives it a "dis-civilized" appearance, as it might have appeared to Adam on the day of creation, or to one blind from birth who has received his sight. It is easy to see that the method, while it gives unusual freshness to imaginative representation, is in essence hostile to all culture and all social form, and is psychologically akin to anarchism. This method of utilizing the atoms of experience which are the common property of mankind and of rejecting the constructions of cultural habit which vary from civilization to civilization is the principal feature that distinguishes the work of Tolstoy from that of other realists, all of them much more dominated by *byt*. The universality of Tolstoy's realism is increased by his concentration on the inner life, and especially on its more elusive experiences, those that are seldom buttonholed by ordinary introspection. When arrested and expressed in words, they give a particularly keen feeling of unexpected familiarity, for it seems that the author is aware of the reader's most intimate, secret, and inexpressible feelings. This mastering of the elusive is irresistible and overwhelming, at least to people who have grown up in a roughly similar emotional ambient. How far this particular side of Tolstoy strengthens his appeals to a Chinaman or to an Arab I cannot say. Tolstoy himself in his old age believed it did not, and in his later work intended for the world, irrespective of race and civilization, he avoided this method of what Constantine Leontiev called "psychological eavesdropping." But without certain limits the "eavesdropping" only enhances the human and universal as against the local and social appeal of the early Tolstoy.

Again the subject-matter of Tolstoy and his way of approaching it increase the universal as much as they diminish the ethnographical appeal of his work. The issues of his stories are not the public issues of contemporary Russia. Except for certain parts of *Anna Karenina* (and for the posthumous comedy *A Contaminated Family*), contemporary issues are absent

from Tolstoy's work. This disqualified it for being used as texts for the civic sermons of Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, but has also prevented it from dating. The issues and the conflicts are moral and psychological, not social, a considerable asset in winning the unqualified understanding of the foreign reader. In his later work this feature is only further developed. His universality gives Tolstoy a somewhat eccentric standing among the Russian novelists of his time. But in another respect he is again eminently representative of the movement. He carried further than anyone (except Aksakov) the deliberate neglect of narrative interest and the deliberate avoidance of artificial construction. He also carried to the furthest the purity of his prose from all extra-representational elements. His style is deliberately prosaic—purged to chemical purity of all "poetry" and rhetoric—sternly puritanical prose. His syntax, especially in the earliest work, is sometimes clumsy and exaggeratedly involved. But at its best it is beautifully adequate and transparent—a prose admirably adapted to its task and perfectly obedient to what it is made to express. The *language* of Tolstoy also deserves special notice for the pains he took to avoid the bookish vocabulary of literature, and to use with consistent purity the spoken vocabulary of his class. It is the best example (after Griboyedov and after Pushkin's epistolary prose) of the spoken Russian of the nobility. It has important points of difference from the language of the mere *littérateur* writers. But his syntax is based on the example of the French analysts and uses all the means at its disposal for complicated logical subordination. This combination of a very pure colloquial vocabulary with a very complicated and logical syntax makes the peculiar individuality of Tolstoy's Russian. In his dialogue, on the other hand, especially from *War and Peace* (and *A Contaminated Family*) onwards, he achieved a purity and convincingness of colloquial idiom and intonation that have not been surpassed. The highest achievement of his art of dialogue, however, belongs to his last period and is to be found in his last plays, *The Light Shines in the Darkness* and *The Living Corpse*.

The roots of Tolstoy's art are to be found in his diary, which

we know from 1847 onwards. It is a continuous apprenticeship in the art of fixing and dissecting his inner experience. Like Stendhal, with whom as a psychologist he has much in common, and whom he recognized as one of his masters, Tolstoy is particularly interested in discovering the semi-conscious suppressed motives of his actions, in exposing the insincerity of the superficial, as it were official, ego. This exposure of himself and of others for ever remained one of his principal occupations as a writer. A detail that cannot fail to strike the reader of Tolstoy's diaries (as well as of certain of his stories written in the fifties) is his inordinate love for classifications, which he marshals under numbered headings. It is a minor, but significant, detail. It has often been affirmed that Tolstoy was an eminently natural, subconscious, elemental man, and that in this he was akin to primitive man, as yet imperfectly differentiated from nature. Nothing can be more misleading. He was on the contrary a rationalist to the marrow, one of the greatest that ever lived. Nothing was safe from the lancet of his analysis. His very forwardness in pushing ever further into the subconscious was a daring adventure of reason in unexplored countries. His art is not the spontaneous revelation of the subconscious but the conquest of the subconscious by lucid understanding. Tolstoy was a predecessor of Freud, but the striking difference between the artist and the scientist is that the artist is incomparably less imaginative, more matter-of-fact and level-headed than the scientist. Freud is a poet and a teller of fairy-tales compared to Tolstoy.* Tolstoy's vaunted familiarity with the subconscious is the familiarity of the conqueror with the conquered land, of the huntsman with his game.

From the beginnings of his diary to the time he wrote *War and Peace*, writing was to Tolstoy above all a struggle to master reality, to found a method and a technique of reducing it to words. To this from 1851 he added the problem of transforming notation of fact into literature. Tolstoy did not achieve it at a single stroke. His first attempt at imaginative

* Tolstoy was a predecessor of Freud also in the keen interest he took in dreams.

writing has only recently been given to us. It is the fragment entitled *An Account of Yesterday.* It is apparently the beginning of an account of an actual twenty-four hours spent by him, with no invention, nothing but notation. It was only to be fuller and less selective than the diaries and subordinated to a general design. In point of detail the *Account* is almost on a Proustian if not a Joycean scale. The author revels as it were in his analysis. He is a young man in possession of a new instrument, who has unbounded confidence in his command of it. The same impression is never again given in any of his later work. This exuberance wanted repression and disciplining before it was fit to be shown to the public. It wanted a more literary, a less immediately "recording" appearance. It wanted the discipline of convention. For all his pioneering courage, Tolstoy had not the audacity of continuing in this line of extensive notation. It is almost a pity he had not. The sheer originality of *An Account of Yesterday* remains unsurpassed. If he had continued in that line, he would probably have met with less immediate recognition, but he might have ultimately produced an even more astounding body of work.

In the light of *An Account of Yesterday, Childhood* seems almost a surrender to all the conventions of literature. Of all Tolstoy's writings it is the one where extraneous literary influences (Sterne, Rousseau, Töpfer) are most clearly apparent. But even now, in the light of *War and Peace, Childhood* retains its unique and unfading charm. It has already that wonderful poetry of reality which is attained without the slightest aid of poetical device, without the aid of language (the few sentimental, rhetorical passages rather tend to destroy it), by the sole help of the choice of significant psychological and real detail. What struck the world as a new thing, hitherto done by no one, was this gift of evoking memories and associations everyone recognized as his own intimate and unique memories by the choice of detail memorable to everyone, but rejected by everyone as insignificant and not worth while. It needed the avid rationalism of Tolstoy to fix for ever these moments that *were* but had remained unrecorded since the beginning of time.

In *Childhood* Tolstoy succeeded for the first time in transpos-

ing the raw material of recorded experience into art. It was written with a literary aim. It aimed at being literature. For a moment Tolstoy abandoned his pioneering energy and was content to draw up a balance of what he had already acquired, in a form not too unlike the accepted conventions of literature. In all he wrote after *Childhood* and up to *War and Peace* he continued his forward movement, experimenting, forging his instrument, never condescending to sacrifice his interest in the process of production to the artistic effect of the finished article. This is apparent in the sequels of *Childhood*, *Boyhood* (1854) and *Youth* (1856), when the poetic, evocative atmosphere of *Childhood* becomes thinner and thinner, and the element of sheer untransformed analysis protrudes more and more. It is still more apparent in his stories of war and of the Caucasus: *A Raid* (1852), *Sevastopol in December*, *Sevastopol in May*, *Sevastopol in August* (1856), *A Wood Felling* (1856). In them he set out to destroy the existing romantic conceptions of those two arch-romantic themes. To be understood in their genesis these stories have to be felt against their background of romantic literature, against the romances of Bestuzhev and the Byronic poems of Pushkin and Lermontov. The unromanticizing of Caucasus and war is achieved by Tolstoy's usual method of ever advancing analysis and of "making it strange." Battles and skirmishes are not described in terms of military history, with its grand nomenclature, nor in terms of battle painting, but in the ordinary and unprepossessing details that strike the actual observer and are only afterwards transformed by a name-ridden memory into heroic battle scenes. Here more than anywhere Tolstoy followed in the footsteps of Stendhal, whose account of Waterloo he recognized as a perfect example of military realism. The same process of destroying the heroic convention was further promoted by the ruthless analysis of the psychological workings that result in the display of courage, which are composed of vanity, of lack of imagination, and of stereotyped thinking. But in spite of this exposure of war and military virtues, the general effect of Tolstoy's military stories is not unheroic or anti-militarist. It results much rather in the glorification of the unconscious and unambitious at the expense

of conscious and ambitious heroism, of the private soldier and professional army officer at the expense of the smart young officer from Petersburg who has come to the front to taste of the poetry of war and to win his St. George's Cross. The casual, matter-of-fact courage of the plain soldier and officer is what strikes the reader most of all in these stories. These humble heroes of Tolstoy's early war stories are descendants of Pushkin's Captain Mironov and of Lermontov's Maxim Maximych and landmarks on the way to the soldiers and army officers of *War and Peace*.

In the stories written in the second half of the fifties and early sixties Tolstoy's centre of interest is shifted from analysis to morality. These stories—*The Memoirs of a Billiard Marker*, *Two Hussars* (1856), *Albert*, *Lucerne* (1857), *Three Deaths*, *Family Happiness* (1859), *Polikushka* (1860), and *Kholstomer*, *the Story of a Horse* (1861, published 1887)—are frankly didactic and moralistic, much more so than any of the stories of his last, dogmatic period. The main moral of these stories is the fallacy of civilization and the inferiority of the civilized, conscious, sophisticated man, with his artificially multiplied needs, to natural man. On the whole they mark an advance neither, as the war stories did, in Tolstoy's method of annexing and digesting reality, nor in his skill in transferring the raw experience of life into art (as in *Childhood* and *War and Peace*). Most of them are crude, and some (as, for instance, *Three Deaths*) did not need a Tolstoy to write them. Contemporary criticism was right in regarding them, if not as a decline, at least as a standstill in the development of his genius. But they are important as an expression of that moral urge that was finally to bring Tolstoy to *A Confession* and to all his later work and teaching. *Lucerne* for its earnest and bitter indignation against the selfishness of the rich (which, it is true, he was inclined at that time to regard, semi-Slavophilwise, as a peculiarity of the materialistic civilization of the West) is particularly suggestive of the spirit of his later work. As a sermon in fiction it is certainly one of the most powerful things of its kind. The nearest approach to complete artistic success is *Two Hussars*, a charming story which betrays its purpose

only in the excessively neat parallelism between the characters of the two Hussars, the father and the son. The father is an "unconscious," "natural" man who lives a rather unedifying life, but who precisely on account of his unconsciousness and proximity to nature is noble even in his vices, and reveals the essential nobility of man. The son in circumstances similar to those of his father shows himself a coward and a cad precisely because he is contaminated by the evil influences of civilization, and what he does does self-consciously. Lastly *Kholstomer, the Story of a Horse*, is certainly one of the most characteristic and curious of all Tolstoy's writings. It is a satire upon civilized mankind from the point of view of a horse. The method of "making it strange" is pushed to its furthest limits. It is essentially a descendant of the Persian, Chinese, and suchlike letters of the eighteenth century, where oriental observers were introduced just to expose the absurdities of contemporary life by making it strange. Here more than elsewhere Tolstoy is the faithful disciple of French rationalism. It is interesting, however, that the keenest point of the satire is turned against the institution of property, and it is characteristic that the story, written just before his marriage, was published only after his conversion.

Apart from the rest of his earliest work stands *The Cossacks*. It was written during his life in the Caucasus (1852–3), but Tolstoy remained unsatisfied with it, returned to it again, and, still unsatisfied, would not have published it were it not for the necessity he found himself in of paying a debt at cards. It appeared in 1863 in a form Tolstoy regarded as unsatisfactory. What he would have done with it ultimately we do not know, but as it is it is probably his masterpiece before *War and Peace*. It is the story of the life of Olenin, a young volunteer of noble birth and university education, in a Cossack village on the Terek. The main idea is the contrast of his sophisticated and self-conscious personality to the "natural men" that are the Cossacks. Here Tolstoy's early ideal of the natural man finds its supreme expression. Unlike the "natural man" of Rousseau (and of Tolstoy's own later teaching) "natural man" in *The Cossacks* is not an incarnation of good. But

the very fact of his being natural places him above the distinction of good and evil. The Cossacks kill, fornicate, steal, and still are beautiful in their naturalness and hopelessly superior to the much more moral, but civilized and consequently contaminated, Olenin. The young Cossack Lukashka, the Cossack girl Marianka, and especially the old huntsman Yeroshka, are among the most memorable and lasting creations of Tolstoy. They are his first great successes in the objective painting of the human figure. But the objective painting of the human soul he was to achieve only in *War and Peace*, for in his early work his analysed and dissected heroes are either emanations of his own self (the hero of *Childhood* and its sequels) or else only more or less abstract and generalized human material for dissection, like the "other" officers in the Sevastopol stories, who are not more psychologically alive than the horse Kholstomer. The processes that go on in them are convincing, but the details of this psychological mechanism are not welded into a whole to form an individuality. This was to be achieved in *War and Peace*.

Tolstoy's first literary work after his marriage was the (only recently published) comedy *A Contaminated Family*. It shows already the conservative trend of his married mind. It is a satire of the nihilist, ending in the triumph of the meek, but fundamentally sensible, father over his rebellious children. It is a masterpiece of delicate character drawing and dialogue. It contains more genuine and good-humoured humour than any other of his works. At one time Tolstoy was very keen on having it acted. But it was rejected by the Imperial Theatre, probably for fear of offending the young generation.

Soon after his marriage Tolstoy began to be attracted by the recent past of the Russian society, and planned a novel on the subject of the Decembrists. Some fragments of this novel were written and published, but before long he found himself unable to understand the Decembrists without a study of the preceding generation, and this led him to the writing of *War and Peace*. It took him over four years. A first fragment under the title *1805* appeared in 1865. The whole novel was completed and published in 1869.

War and Peace is not only in size but in perfection the masterpiece of the early Tolstoy. It is also the most important work in the whole of Russian realistic fiction. If in the whole range of the European novel of the nineteenth century it has equals, it has no superiors, and the peculiarities of the modern, as opposed to the pre-nineteenth-century, novel are more clearly seen in it than in such rivals as *Madame Bovary* or *Le Rouge et le Noir*. It was an advanced pioneering work, a work that widened, as few novels have done, the province and the horizon of fiction. In a text-book, where space is limited, it is impossible to speak at all adequately of the great novel. Besides, more than anything else in Russian literature, it belongs to Europe as much as it does to Russia. A history of the European novel would have to place it not so much in its Russian as in its international setting, on the line of development that leads from the novels of Stendhal to those of Henry James and Proust. It must be presumed that the reader is familiar with it. I cannot conceive of anyone opening the present book who has not read it from first to last page. So it is useless to recall that the period it describes is 1805–12, with an epilogue acted in 1820; and that it consists of four volumes. In many respects *War and Peace* is a direct continuation of the preceding works of Tolstoy. The methods of analysis and of "making it strange" are the same, only carried to a greater perfection. The use of apparently elusive, but emotionally significant, detail for the creation of poetic atmosphere is a direct development of the methods of *Childhood*. The presentation of war as an unromantic and sordid reality, but one that is nevertheless pregnant with heroical beauty in the courage of its unconscious heroes is a direct continuation of the Sevastopol stories. The glorification of "natural man," of Natasha and Nicholas Rostov at the expense of the sophisticated Prince Andrew, and of the peasant Platon Karataev, at the expense of all the civilized heroes, continues the line of thought of *Two Hussars* and of *The Cossacks*. The satirical representation of society and of diplomacy is completely in line with Tolstoy's disgust at European civilization. However, in other respects it is different from the earlier work. First of all it is more

objective. Here for the first time Tolstoy becomes capable of stepping out of himself and of seeing into the other. Unlike *The Cossacks* and *Childhood* the novel is not egocentrical. There are several heroes with equal rights, none of whom are Tolstoy, though the two principal ones, Prince Andrew and Pierre Bezukhov, are no doubt transpositions of Tolstoy. But the most wonderful difference of *War and Peace* from the earlier stories are the women, Princess Maria and especially Natasha. There can be no doubt that it was his increased knowledge of feminine nature, due to marriage, that enabled Tolstoy to annex this new province of psychological experience. The art of individualization also attains to unsurpassable perfection. The little details that made the unique and unprecedented charm of *Childhood* are used here with a supreme and elusive perfection that transcends art and gives the book (and *Anna Karenina*), alone, perhaps, among all books, the appearance of actual life. To many of Tolstoy's readers his personages are not classified with other characters of fiction, but with men and women of actual experience. The roundness, the completeness, the liveness of the characters, even of the most episodic, are perfect and absolute. This is attained, of course, by the extraordinary subtlety, delicacy, and variety of the analysis (we are far removed from the crudish and schematic methods of *Sevastopol*), but it is also attained by the means of more elusive detail, of "accompaniment," and especially of language. The speech Tolstoy lends his characters is something that surpasses perfection. In *War and Peace* he attains for the first time to a complete mastery of this medium. It gives the reader the impression of actually hearing the different individual voices of the characters. You recognize the voice of Natasha, or Vera, or Boris Drubetskoy as you recognize the voice of a friend. In this art of individualized intonation Tolstoy has only one rival—Dostoyevsky. There is no need to dwell on the individual characters. But it is impossible not to insist once more on the supreme creation of Natasha, certainly the most wonderfully made character in any novel. Natasha is also the centre of the novel, for she is the symbol of "natural man," the ideal.

The transformation of reality into art is also more perfect in

War and Peace than in anything that preceded it. It is almost complete.* The novel is built along its own laws (Tolstoy has let escape him some interesting hints as to these laws) and contains few undigested bits of raw material. The narrative is a miracle. The vast proportions, the numerous personages, the frequent changes of scene, and the close and necessary interconnexion of all give the impression of being really a record of a society, not only of so many individuals.

The philosophy of the novel is the glorification of nature and life at the expense of the sophistications of reason and civilization. It is the surrender of the rationalist Tolstoy to the irrational forces of existence. It is emphasized in the theoretical chapters and it is symbolized in the last volume in the figure of Karatayev. The philosophy is profoundly optimistic, for it is *confidence* in the blind forces of life, a profound belief that the best one can do is not to choose, but to trust in the goodness of things. The passive and determinist Kutuzov embodies the philosophy of wise passivity as against the ambitious smallness of Napoleon. The optimistic nature of the philosophy is reflected in the idyllic tone of the narrative. In spite of the horror, by no means veiled, of war, and the ineptitude, assiduously unmasked, of sophisticated and futile civilization, the general message of *War and Peace* is one of beauty and satisfaction that the world should be so beautiful. It is only the sophistication of conscious reason that contrives to spoil it. The general tone may be properly described as idyllic. The inclination towards the idyllic was from first to last an ever-present possibility in Tolstoy. It is the opposite pole to his unceasing moral uneasiness. Before the time of *War and Peace* it pervades *Childhood*, and it strangely and unexpectedly crops up in his autobiographical notes written in his last years for Biryukov. Its roots are in a sense of unity with his class, with the happy and prosperous *byt* of the Russian nobility.

* Not as complete as in certain works of other great realists; not for instance as complete as in *Madame Bovary*. But then neither Flaubert nor anyone else ever absorbed so much of reality in the transforming process. The quantity of transforming energy utilized in *War and Peace* is greater than in any other work of realistic fiction.

And it is, after all, no exaggeration to say that, all said and done, *War and Peace* is a tremendous "heroic idyll" of the Russian nobility.

There are two conceivable strictures on *War and Peace*, the figure of Karatayev, and the theoretical chapters on history and warfare. Personally I do not admit the validity of the latter drawback. It is an essential of Tolstoy's art to be not only art, but knowledge. And to the vast canvas of the great novel the theoretical chapters add a perspective and an intellectual atmosphere one cannot wish away.* I feel it more difficult to put up with Karatayev. In spite of his quintessential importance for the idea of the novel, he jars. He is not in tune with the whole; he is in another key. He is not a human being among human beings, as the other two ideally natural characters, Natasha and Kutuzov, are. He is an abstraction, a myth, a being with different dimensions and laws from those of the rest of the novel. He does not fit in.

After *War and Peace* Tolstoy, pursuing his historical studies, ascended the stream of Russian history to the age of Peter the Great. The period appeared to him as critical in bringing about the cleft between the people and the educated classes and in poisoning the latter with European civilization. He tried several plans and wrote several beginnings of a novel of those times, which have been recently published. But in the course of his studies Tolstoy became so disgusted with the person of the great Emperor—the embodiment of all he hated—that he gave it up. Instead he began in 1873 to write a novel of contemporary life—*Anna Karenina.* The first instalments appeared in 1874, and the publication of the novel was completed in 1877.

Anna Karenina is in all essentials a continuation of *War and Peace.* The methods of Tolstoy are the same in both, and the two novels are justly named together. What has been said of the personages of *War and Peace* may be repeated of

* It may be remarked that as an historian of war Tolstoy gave proof of remarkable insight. His reading of the battle of Borodino, which he arrived at by sheer intuition, has been since corroborated by documental evidence and accepted by military historians.

those of *Anna Karenina*. The figures of Anna, of Dolly, of Kitty, of Stiva Oblonsky, of Vronsky, of all the episodic and secondary personages, are as memorable as those of Natasha and of Nicholas Rostov. Perhaps there is even a greater variety and a more varied sympathy in the characters of *Anna Karenina*. Vronsky particularly is a genuine and fundamental addition to the world of Tolstoy; more than any other of Tolstoy's characters he is fundamentally different from the author and in no way based on subjective vision. He and Anna are perhaps Tolstoy's greatest achievements in the understanding of "the other." But Levin is a much less happily transformed Tolstoy than are his double-headed emanations in *War and Peace*, Prince Andrew and Pierre. Levin is a return to the subjective, diaristic Nekhlyudovs and Olenins of the early stories, and he jars in the story as much as does Platon Karatayev in *War and Peace*, though in an exactly opposite way. Another difference between the two novels is that *Anna Karenina* contains no separate philosophical chapters, but a more obtrusive and insidious moral philosophy is diffused throughout the story. The philosophy is less irrational and optimistic, more puritan, and is everywhere felt as distinct from and alien to the main groundwork of the novel. The groundwork has the idyllic flavour of *War and Peace*. But in the philosophy of the novel there is an ominous suggestion of the approach of a more tragic God than the blind and good life-God of *War and Peace*. The tragic atmosphere thickens as the story advances towards the end. The romance of Anna and Vronsky, who had transgressed the moral and social law, culminates in blood and horror to which there is no counterpart in the earlier novel. Even the idyllic romance of the good and obedient-to-nature Levin and Kitty ends on a note of confused perplexity. The novel dies like a cry of anguish in the desert air. Both the great novels have an indefinite ending, but while in *War and Peace* it only suggests the infinite continuity of life of which the given narrative has been only a detached fragment, in *Anna Karenina* it definitely suggests a no-thoroughfare, a path gradually losing itself before the steps of the wayfarer. And in fact before Tolstoy had finished

Anna Karenina, he had already entered on the crisis that was to bring him to his conversion. The perplexed ending of the novel is only a reflection of the tragic perplexity he was himself experiencing. He was never again to write a novel like these two. After finishing *Anna Karenina* he attempted to resume his work on Peter and on the Decembrists, but it was soon forsaken, and instead, two years after the completion of his last idyll, he wrote *A Confession*.

Anna Karenina leads up to the moral and religious crisis that was so profoundly to revolutionize Tolstoy. Before he began it he had already begun to cast his eyes on new artistic methods—abandoning the psychological and analytical manner of superfluous detail and discovering a simpler narrative style that could be applied not only to the sophisticated and corrupt educated classes, but to the undeveloped mind of the people. The stories he wrote for the people in 1872 (*God Sees the Truth*, and *The Captive in the Caucasus*, which, by the way, is merely a translation into unromantic terms, a sort of parody, of the poem of Pushkin) already announce the popular tales of 1885–6. They are not yet so pointedly moral, but they are all concentrated on narrative and action, and are entirely free from all "eavesdropping."

2. DOSTOYEVSKY (AFTER 1849)

From March 1850 to March 1854 Dostoyevsky * served his term of penal servitude at Omsk convict prison. During the whole term he had no books to read but a Bible and he was never for a moment alone. During these years he underwent a profound religious crisis: he rejected the social and progressive ideas of his youth and became converted to the religion of the Russian people, in the sense that he began not only to believe in what the people believed, but to believe in it *because* the people believed. On the other hand his four years of hard labour greatly injured his health, and his epilepsy became more marked and more frequent.

On completing his term he was transferred as a private sol-

* For the early life and work of Dostoyevsky see chapter VI, 2.

dier to an infantry battalion garrisoned at Semipalatinsk, on the Irtysh. Eighteen months later (October 1855) his commission was restored to him. He was now free to write and receive letters, and to resume his literary work. In 1856, while staying at Kuznetsk, he married the widow Isaeva. This first marriage was not a happy one. He remained in Siberia till 1859. During these five years he wrote besides some shorter stories the novel *The Manor of Stepanchikovo*, which appeared in 1859, and began *Memoirs from the House of Death*. In 1859 he was allowed to return to European Russia. A little later in the same year he was finally amnestied and came to Petersburg.

He arrived in the midst of the great reform movement and was immediately sucked into the journalistic whirlpool. Together with his brother Michael he started the review *Vremya* (*The Time*), which began appearing in January 1861. In the first two years he contributed to the review a novel, *Humiliated and Insulted*, and *The House of Death*, besides a great number of articles. Though the position that the Dostoyevskys took up fitted in with no party, their review was a success. What they stood for was a sort of mystical populism that did not want to make the people happy along Western and progressive lines, but to assimilate the ideals of the people. They found a valuable ally in Strakhov. Their other ally, Grigoriev, was of little use at the time, as he was traversing the most chaotic and anarchic period of his life. Dostoyevsky himself worked furiously, and often succumbed to the overstrain. But he was exhilarated by success and by the atmosphere of struggle. In 1862 he travelled for the first time abroad, visiting England, France, and Germany, and recorded his impressions of the West in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, which appeared in the first numbers of *Vremya* for 1863. In them he attacked and condemned the impious *bourgeois* civilization of the West from a point of view that is connected at once with Herzen's and with that of the Slavophils. In 1863 quite unexpectedly, like a bolt from the blue, came the suppression of *Vremya*, for an article on the Polish question by Strakhov, which had been, quite literally, misread by the Censorship. The misunderstanding was cleared up before long, and the Dostoyevskys allowed

to resume their review as from January 1864 under a new name (the *Epoch*), but the financial damages caused them by the suppression were incalculable. For eight years Dostoyevsky was unable to free himself from them. Meanwhile he was undergoing a crisis of greater significance than his conversion in Siberia. To the years 1862–3 belongs his liaison with Apollinaria Suslova, the most important love-affair of his life. After the suppression of *Vremya* he travelled with her abroad. It was on this journey that he lost for the first time heavily at the roulette. Mlle Suslova (who afterwards married the great writer Rozanov) was a proud and (to use a Dostoyevskian epithet) "infernal" woman, with unknown depths of cruelty and of evil. She seems to have been to Dostoyevsky an important revelation of the dark side of things.

The *Epoch* began under the worst auspices. The action of the authorities prevented it from being advertised in due time, and it never succeeded in recovering the goodwill of the subscribers of *Vremya*. Soon after it was started, Dostoyevsky's wife died, and, almost simultaneously, Michael Dostoyevsky. The death of Grigoriev in the autumn of the same year was a further blow to the review. Dostoyevsky found himself alone and with the whole family of his brother to provide for. After fifteen months of heroical and hectic labour he gave in, recognizing that the *Epoch* could not be saved. The review was closed. Dostoyevsky was bankrupt. It was in the terrible year 1864 that Dostoyevsky wrote the most unique of all his works, *Memoirs from Underground*.

To meet his enormous liabilities he set down to work at his great novels. In 1865–6 he wrote *Crime and Punishment*. He sold the copyright of all his works for the ludicrous sum of three thousand roubles ($1500) to the publisher Stellovsky. The contract stipulated that besides all previously published work Dostoyevsky was to deliver to Stellovsky by November 1866 a full-length unpublished novel. To meet this obligation he began writing *The Gambler*, and to be able to finish it in time he engaged a shorthand secretary, Anna Grigorievna Snitkin. Owing to her efficient help, *The Gambler* was deliv-

ered in time. A few months later he married his secretary (February 1867).

Anna Grigorievna proved the best of wives, and in the long run it was owing to her devotion and practical sense (as much as to his own enormous working capacity) that Dostoyevsky freed himself from his debts and was able to spend the last ten years of his life in comparatively easy circumstances. But the first years after their marriage were beset with the most cruel ordeals. Very soon after the wedding Dostoyevsky had to leave Russia and for four years remained abroad for fear of falling into the hands of his creditors if he returned to Russia. His difficulties were aggravated by a new access of gambling-frenzy in the summer of 1867. Only gradually, by dint of hard and hurried labour at his great novels and with the aid of Anna Grigorievna, he once more stood on his feet and in 1871 could return to Russia. The years between the suppression of *Vremya* and his return to Russia after four years' life abroad were both in quantity and in significance the most productive of his whole life. *Memoirs from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Gambler*, *The Idiot* (1869), *The Eternal Husband* (1870), and *The Devils* (1871), all belong to this period, while the plan of *The Life of a Great Sinner*, planned in the same year, contains the germ of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

When they returned to Petersburg, the Dostoyevskys, though not at first free from all difficulties, began to have better luck. The publication in book form, at their own expense, of *The Devils* (1873) was a success. In the same year Dostoyevsky became editor of Prince V. Meschersky's weekly the *Citizen*. This gave him a settled income. In 1876 he began himself publishing *An Author's Diary*, which had a considerable sale. The political ideas of Dostoyevsky were now more in tune with the times, and his influence grew. He felt a more sympathetic atmosphere round him. The high-water mark of his popularity was reached in the year preceding his death, when appeared *The Brothers Karamazov*. The culmination was his famous address at the unveiling of the Pushkin memorial in Moscow on 8th June 1880. The address evoked an enthusiasm that had

no precedents in Russian literary history. The following winter he fell seriously ill, and on 28th January 1881 he died.

Both psychologically and historically Dostoyevsky is a very complex figure, and it is necessary to distinguish not only between the various periods of his life, and the various currents of his mind, but between the different *levels* of his personality. The higher, or rather deeper, level is present only in the imaginative work of his last seventeen years, beginning with *Memoirs from Underground*. The lower, or rather more superficial, level is apparent in all his work, but more particularly in his journalistic writings and in the imaginative work of before 1864. The deeper, the essential, Dostoyevsky is one of the most significant and ominous figures in the whole history of the human mind, one of its boldest and most disastrous adventures in the sphere of ultimate spiritual quest. The superficial Dostoyevsky is a man of his time, comparable, and not always favourably comparable, to many other Russian novelists and publicists of the age of Alexander II, a mind that had many equals and rivals and that cannot be placed in any way apart from, or above, Herzen, Grigoriev, or Leontiev. The other one, the essential Dostoyevsky, for the profundity, complexity, and significance of his spiritual experience has only two possible rivals in the whole range of Russian literature—Rozanov and of course Tolstoy, who, however, seems to have been given the world for the special purpose of contrasting him with Dostoyevsky.

The comparison between Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky has for many years been, with Russian and foreign critics, a favourite subject of discussion. Much has been said of the aristocratic nature of the former and the plebeian nature of the latter; of the one's Luciferian pride and the other's Christian humility; of the naturalism of the one and the spiritualism of the other. Needless to say, ever since about 1900 the comparison has always been made to turn out to the profit of Dostoyevsky. For all the "modern" movement in Russia has been an assertion of his spirit as against that of Tolstoy. Apart from the difference of social position and education a main difference between

the two is that Tolstoy was a puritan, and Dostoyevsky a symbolist. That is to say that for Dostoyevsky all relative values were related to absolute values and received their significance, positive or negative, from the way they reflected the higher values. For Tolstoy the absolute and the relative are two disconnected worlds, and the relative is in itself evil. Hence Tolstoy's contempt for the meaningless diversity of human history, and Dostoyevsky's eminently historical mode of thinking, which relates him to all the main line of higher Russian thought—to Chaadaev, the Slavophils, Herzen, Grigoriev, Leontiev, and Soloviev. Dostoyevsky is one of them: his thought is always historically related. Even in their most purely spiritual form his problems are not concerned with an eternal, static, and immutable law, but with the drama that is being played out in human history by the supreme forces of the universe. All the facts of history and human culture are significant to Dostoyevsky and have a definite, positive or negative, value. Hence the great complexity, fluidity, and many-sidedness of his thought as compared to the rigidly geometrical and rectilinear thinking of Tolstoy. Tolstoy (in spite of his sensitiveness to the infinitesimals of life) was in his moral philosophy, both on the high level of *A Confession* and on the much lower level of his anti-alcoholic and vegetarian tracts, a Euclid or moral quantities. Dostoyevsky deals in the elusive calculus of fluid values. Hence also what Strakhov so happily called the "purity" of Tolstoy and what may be called the obvious "impurity" of Dostoyevsky. He was never dealing with stable entities, but with fluid processes; and not seldom the process was one of dissolution and putrefaction.

On a more social and historical plane it is also important to note that while Tolstoy was an aristocrat and (alone of his literary contemporaries) culturally had his roots in the old French and eighteenth-century civilization of the Russian gentry, Dostoyevsky was, to the core, a plebeian and a democrat. He belonged to the same historical and social formation that produced Belinsky, Nekrasov, and Grigoriev, and to this is due, among other things, that absence of all grace, and elegance,

whether internal or external, that characterizes all his work, together with an absence of reserve, discipline, and dignity, and an excess of abnormal self-consciousness.

The great, later novels of Dostoyevsky are ideological novels. The idea of the novel is inseparable from the imaginative conception, and neither can it be abstracted from the story nor the story stripped of the idea. But this does not apply to the novels of his middle period, 1857–63, which are in many ways a continuation of his early work (1845–9) rather than an anticipation of what was to follow. The work of 1857–63 belongs to the same superficial level as Dostoyevsky's earlier work. The deeper abysses of his consciousness are not yet revealed in it. It is different, however, from the work of the forties in that it is free from the immediate influence of Gogol and from the intense stylistic preoccupation that marks *Poor Folk* and *The Double*. The principal works of this period are *The Manor of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants* (1859; in Mrs. Garnett's translation, *The Friend of the Family*), *Humiliated and Insulted* (1861), and *Memoirs from a House of Death* (1861–2). Of these *Humiliated and Insulted* is a novel closely connected in style and tone with the French romantic novel of social compassion and with the later and less humorous novels of Dickens. The religion of compassion, verging often on melodramatic sentimentality, finds there its purest expression, as yet uncomplicated by the deeper problems of the next period. The plot is complicated and melodramatic, and has already all that suffocating tensity of suspense and high-strung nervousness that characterizes *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*. But it has not yet the white-hot temperature of intellectual passion of the later novels.

Stepanchikovo also lacks the intellectual passionateness and richness of the essential Dostoyevsky, but in other respects it is one of the most characteristic of his works. All his great novels have a construction that is dramatic rather than narrative. They can easily and without substantial changes in their construction be turned into plays. *Stepanchikovo* is the most dramatic of all (it was originally planned as a play). Only, of course, it is far too long for the theatre. It is also

interesting for the way it displays what Mikhaylovsky called the "cruelty" of Dostoyevsky. Its subject is the intolerable psychological bullying inflicted by the hypocrite and parasite, Foma Opiskin, on his host, Colonel Rostanev. The imbecile meekness with which the Colonel consents to be bullied and allows all around him, his friends and servants, to be bullied by Opiskin, and the perverse inventiveness of Foma in devising various psychological humiliations for his victims produce an impression of intolerable, almost physical, pain. Foma Opiskin is a weird figure of grotesque, gratuitous, irresponsible, petty, and ultimately joyless evil, that together with Saltykov's Porfiri Golovlev and Sologub's Peredonov form a trinity to which probably no foreign literature has anything to compare. *Stepanchikovo* was intended for a comical and humorous story with a touch of satire (aimed, it would seem, at Gogol, as revealed by *A Correspondence with Friends*), but it must be confessed that though the element of humour is unmistakably present, it is a kind of humour that requires a rather peculiar constitution to amuse.

The same "cruelty" in an even more elaborate form is to be found in the most characteristic of the shorter stories of this period—*A Bad Predicament* (1862), where with a detail on the scale of *The Double* Dostoyevsky describes the sufferings of humiliated self-consciousness experienced by a superior Civil Servant at a wedding of a minor clerk of his, where he comes uninvited, behaves himself ridiculously, gets drunk, and involves the poor clerk in heavy expenses.

Apart from these stories stand *Memoirs from the House of Death* (1861–2), during the lifetime of Dostoyevsky his most famous and most universally recognized book. It is the account of a term of penal servitude spent by a convict of the educated classes in a Siberian prison, mainly based on autobiographical material. Like the other works of Dostoyevsky before 1864 it is free from his later complex and deeper experience. Its ultimate message is one of human and optimistic sympathy. Even the moral degradation of the most hardened criminals is not represented so as to make one lose faith in human nature. It is rather a protest against the inefficiency

of punishment. In spite of the dreadful, sordid, and degrading details of crime and cruelty *The House of Death* is, after all, a bright and glad book, full of "uplift," and well made to fit in with an age of optimistic social idealism. The main motif of the book was the tragic estrangement between the educated convict and the people: even at the end of his term the narrator feels himself an outcast in a world of outcasts. Stripped of all external social privilege and placed in equal conditions with several hundreds of simple Russian people, he discovers that he is rejected by them and will ever remain an outcast from their midst for the mere fact of belonging to the educated class that had torn itself away from the people's ideals. This idea closely relates *The House of Death* to the journalistic writings of Dostoyevsky.

Dostoyevsky's non-imaginative writings belong to two principal periods: the articles he contributed in 1861–5 to *Vremya* and the *Epoch*, and *An Author's Diary* of 1873–81. On the whole his political philosophy may be defined as a democratic Slavophilism or a mystical populism. It has points of contact with Grigoriev and the Slavophils, but also with Herzen and the populists. Its main idea is that Russian educated society must be redeemed by a renewal of contact with the people, and by an acceptance of the people's religious ideals; that is to say, of Orthodoxy. On the whole it may be said that the democratic and populist element predominates in the writings of the sixties, while in the seventies, under the influence of the growth of revolutionary socialism, the nationalist and conservative element tends to get the upper hand. But on the whole Dostoyevsky's journalism is more or less of a piece from beginning to end. His religion is Orthodoxy *because* it is the religion of the Russian people, whose mission it is to redeem the world by a reassertion of the Christian faith. Christianity to him is the religion not so much of purity and salvation as of charity and compassion. All this is obviously connected with the ideas of Grigoriev and his teaching of meekness as the essential message of Russia to the world. Dostoyevsky's enemies were the atheistic radicals and socialists, and all the impious forces of Western, atheistic civilization. The victory of

Christian Russia over the godless West was his political and historical faith. The taking of Constantinople is a necessary symbolic item of his program as the sanction of the universal mission of the Russian nation.

Somewhat apart, and once more strongly inclining to the Left, stands the Pushkin address, the most famous and concentratedly significant of his unimaginative writings. Here he praises Pushkin for the virtue of "pan-humanity," which is the gift of understanding all peoples and civilizations. It is the main feature of the Russian people. The union of all humanity is the message and mission of Russia to the world—a strange prophecy of the Third International. In the same address, largely retracting from his previous writings, he extolled the "Russian wanderer," by which term he covertly designated the Revolutionaries and their predecessors. He discerned in them a yearning after religious truth that was only temporarily obscured by the lure of atheistic socialism. In commenting on The *Gipsies*, moreover, he expounded something like a theory of mystical anarchism, and proclaimed the wickedness of all violence and punishment, thus unexpectedly forestalling Tolstoy's doctrine of non-opposition. The Pushkin address did much to reconcile the radicals with Dostoyevsky.

It also displays one of the most attractive features of Dostoyevsky the publicist—his boundless faculty of enthusiasm and admiration. The greatest portion of it went to Pushkin. But he speaks with equal enthusiasm of Racine, and there have been few nobler tributes to the memory of a literary and political enemy than Dostoyevsky's obituary of Nekrasov.

Dostoyevsky's style in his journalistic writings is, of course, unmistakably personal. But like all the journalistic press of the time it is diffuse and formless. The individual vices of Dostoyevsky as a prose-writer are a certain nervous shrillness and uneasiness of tone, which reappear in his novels wherever he has to speak in his own person.

The dialogue of his novels, and the monologue of those of his writings that are written in the person of some fictitious character, are also marked by a nervous tension and an exasperated (and perhaps exasperating) "on-end-ness" that was

their creator's own. They are all agitated, as it were, by a wind of desperate spiritual passion and anxiety, rising from the innermost recesses of his subconsciousness. In spite of the *air de famille* of all his characters, Dostoyevsky's dialogue, and personative monologue, are incomparable for his wonderful art of individualization. There is an enormous variety of individuality in the comparatively limited and narrow compass of Dostoyevsky's mankind.

In all the later imaginative work of Dostoyevsky (from *Memoirs from Underground* to *Brothers Karamazov*) it is impossible to separate the ideological from the artistic conception. They are inextricably intertwined. As I have said, these novels are novels of ideas, where the characters, for all their enormous vitality and individuality, are after all only atoms charged with the electricity of ideas. It has been said of Dostoyevsky that he "felt ideas," as others feel cold and heat and pain. This distinguishes him from all other imaginative writers—the same faculty of "feeling ideas" is to be discovered only in certain great religious thinkers, in St. Paul, St. Augustine, Pascal, and Nietzsche.

Dostoyevsky is a psychological novelist, and his principal means of expression is analysis. In this he is the twin and counterpart of Tolstoy. But both the object and the method of his analysis are quite different from Tolstoy's. Tolstoy dissects the soul in its vital aspects; he studies the physiological basis of the mind, the subconscious workings of the will, the anatomy of the individual act. The higher spiritual states, when he comes to them, are discovered to be *outside* and on a different plane from life. They have no dimensions; they are entirely irrational to the ordinary stream of experience. Dostoyevsky, on the contrary, deals in those psychic strata where the mind and will are in constant contact with higher spiritual entities, where the ordinary stream of experience is constantly deflected by ultimate and absolute values and agitated by a never subsiding wind of the spirit. It is interesting to compare the treatment of the same feeling, the feeling of self-consciousness, by Tolstoy and by Dostoyevsky. Both were painfully self-conscious. But in Tolstoy it is a purely social

sensitiveness, the consciousness of the unfavourable impression produced by one's own personal appearance and conduct on persons one would like to impress favourably. Hence, with the growth of his social independence and the extinction of his social ambitions, the theme ceases to occupy Tolstoy. In Dostoyevsky the torture of self-consciousness is the torture of the ultimate and absolute value of a human personality, wounded, unrecognized and humiliated by other human personalities. Dostoyevsky's "cruelty" finds a particularly rich field to feed on in the analysis of wounded and suffering human dignity. Either Tolstoy's self-consciousness is social, or it ceases to operate; Dostoyevsky's is metaphysical and religious and can never disappear. This again brings forward the "purity" of Tolstoy and the "impurity" of Dostoyevsky: Tolstoy could overcome all his human failures and become a "naked man" before eternity. In Dostoyevsky his very spirit was inextricably entangled in the symbolical meshes of "relative reality." Hence also Tolstoy's later condemnation of the superfluous details of realism with their absence of bearing on essential things, and Dostoyevsky's inability ever to transcend the limit of the temporal.

Dostoyevsky's method of analysis is also different from Tolstoy's. He does not dissect, but reconstructs. Tolstoy's question is always *why?* Dostoyevsky's, *what?* This enables him in many of his novels to do without all direct analysis of feelings and to reveal the inner life of his characters by their acts and speeches. For what they are is inevitably reflected in what they do and say. This is the symbolist attitude, with its faith in the necessary and real interconnexion of the relative (behaviour) and the absolute (personality), while for the "puritan" mentality of Tolstoy behaviour is only a veil cast over the non-dimensional core of the soul.

Memoirs from Underground, the work that introduces us, chronologically, to the "mature" Dostoyevsky, contains at once the essence of his essential self. It cannot be regarded as imaginative literature pure and simple. There is in it quite as much philosophy as literature. It would have to be connected with his journalistic writings were it not that it pro-

ceeded from a deeper and more significant spiritual level of his personality. The work occupies a central place in the creation of Dostoyevsky. Here his essential tragical intuition is expressed in the most unadulterated and ruthless form. It transcends art and literature, and its place is among the great mystical revelations of mankind. The faith in the supreme value of the human personality and of its freedom and in the irrational religious and tragic foundation of the spiritual universe, which is above reason, above the distinction of good and evil (the faith, ultimately, of all mystical religion), is expressed in a paradoxical, unexpected, and entirely spontaneous form. The central position of *Memoirs from Underground* in the work of Dostoyevsky was first discerned (as has recently become known) by Nietzsche, and by Rozanov. It stands in the centre of the writings of Shestov, the greatest of Dostoyevsky's commentators. Viewed as literature, it is also the most original of Dostoyevsky's works, though also the most unpleasant and the most "cruel." It was on the example of *Memoirs from Underground* that Mikhaylovsky demonstrated his thesis of cruelty's being the essential feature of Dostoyevsky. It cannot be recommended to those who are not either sufficiently strong to overcome it, or sufficiently innocent to remain unpoisoned. It is a strong poison, which is most safely left untouched.

Closely connected with *Memoirs from Underground*, also written in the form of a monologue and also belonging to philosophy at least as much as to literature, is the *Dream of a Ridiculous Man*, included in *An Author's Diary* for 1876. Among the other imaginative fragments included in that journalistic *Diary*, *Krotkaya* (*A Meek Heart*) is a dramatic dialogue of a more purely psychological kind, while *Bobok*, a dialogue of the dead decaying in their respective graves in a public cemetery, is a terrible vision, grimly ironical, of second and final death.

Of the novels, *The Gambler*, *The Eternal Husband*, *The Adolescent* are not philosophical in the same sense as the four great novels are: *The Gambler* is interesting as being demonstrably self-revelatory in its description of the gambling-fever, and as giving in the figure of Pauline one of the most remark-

able expressions of Dostoyevsky's favourite type of the proud and demoniac woman, which seems to be connected with the real person of Apollinaria Suslova. *The Eternal Husband* belongs to the most "cruel" of his writings. It turns round the irreparable spiritual injury inflicted on the wronged human dignity of a husband by the lover of his wife, and on his subtle and slow revenge (a torture to himself as to the other) on his wronger. *The Adolescent* (1875) of all Dostoyevsky's writings is most closely connected with the journalistic *An Author's Diary*, and is ideological on a lower plane than the four great novels.

Crime and Punishment (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *The Devils* (1871), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), the four great novels, form, as it were, a connected cycle. They are all dramatic in construction, tragical in conception, and philosophical in significance. They are very complex wholes: not only is the plot inextricably woven into the philosophy—in the philosophy itself the essential Dostoyevsky, whom we have in a pure form in *Memoirs from Underground*, is inseparably mixed with the more journalistic Dostoyevsky of *An Author's Diary*. Hence the possibility of reading these novels in at least three different ways. The first, the way their contemporaries read them, relates them to the current issues of Russian public and social life of 1865–80. The second views them as the progressive disclosure of a "new Christianity," which found its final expression in the figures of Zosima and Alesha Karamazov, in the last of the four novels. The third connects them with *Memoirs from Underground* and the central tragic core of Dostoyevsky's spiritual experience. At last our contemporaries have discovered a fourth way of reading them, which pays no attention to their philosophy and takes them as pure stories of melodramatic incident.

His contemporaries, who kept to the first set of readings, regarded Dostoyevsky as a writer of great natural gifts but questionable taste and insufficient artistic discipline, who had original views on matters of general interest and a considerable power to make his characters live. They deplored his lack of taste, his grotesque mispresentation of real life, his weakness

for crudely sensational effects, but admired his great knowledge of morbid human types and the power of his psychopathic analysis. If they were conservatives, they recognized truth in the picture he drew of the nihilists; if they were radicals, they lamented that a man who had been ennobled by political martyrdom should stoop to be the ally of dirty reactionaries.

The Dostoyevskians of the following generation accepted the novels as a revelation of a new Christianity where ultimate problems of good and evil were discussed and played out with ultimate decisiveness and which, taken as a whole, gave a new doctrine, complete in all points, of spiritual Christianity. The tragic failure of Raskolnikov to assert his individuality "without God," the saintly idiocy of Prince Myshkin, the dreadful picture of godless socialism in *The Devils*, above all the figure of the "pure" Alesha Karamazov and the preachings of the holy Zosima, were accepted as dogmatic revelations of a new and ultimate form of religion. This attitude towards Dostoyevsky, dominant in the early years of this century, has still numerous partisans among the older generation. To them Dostoyevsky is the prophet of a new and supreme "universal harmony," which is to transcend and pacify all the discords and tragedies of mankind.

But the truth is (and here lies the exceptional significance of Dostoyevsky as a spiritual case) that the tragedies of Dostoyevsky are irreducible tragedies that cannot be solved or pacified. His harmonies and his solutions are all on a lower or shallower level than his conflicts and his tragedies. To understand Dostoyevsky is to accept his tragedies as irreducible, and not to try to shirk them by the contrivances of his smaller self. His Christianity in particular is of a very doubtful kind. It is impossible to overlook the fact that it was no ultimate solution to him, that it did not reach into the ultimate depths of his soul, that it was a more or less superficial spiritual formation which it is dangerous to identify with real Christianity. But these issues are too complicated, too important, and too debatable to be more than pointed at in a book of the present kind.

The ideological character of Dostoyevsky's novels is in itself

sufficient to mark him off from the rest of the Russian realistic school. It is obviously different in kind from the social messages of the novels of Turgenev or Goncharov. The interests at stake are of a different order. The fusion of the philosophical and imaginative fabric is complete; the conversations are never irrelevant, because they *are* the novel (as the analysis can never be irrelevant in Tolstoy's or the atmosphere in Turgenev's novels). Novels of the same kind have been written only under the direct influence of Dostoyevsky by novelists of the symbolist school, but of them only Andrey Bely has succeeded in being original and creative.

Another feature that distinguishes Dostoyevsky from the other realists is his partiality for sensationalism and elaborate intrigue. In this he is a true disciple of Balzac, of the French sensational school, and of Dickens. His novels, however charged they may be with ideas and philosophy, are in substance novels of mystery and suspense. He was in complete control of the technique of this kind of novel. The devices he uses to lengthen the suspense and mystery of his novels are numerous. Everyone remembers the ultimately unsolved mystery of the murder of old Karamazov and the cat-and-mouse game of Porfiri, the examining magistrate, with Raskolnikov. A characteristic device is also the omission in *The Idiot* of all account of the life of Prince Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Nastasia Filipovna in Moscow in the period between the first and second parts, while it is often mysteriously alluded to in an offhand manner as if to explain their subsequent relations. The atmosphere of tension to bursting point is arrived at by a series of minor devices, familiar to every reader of every novel of Dostoyevsky, which are easily reducible to a common principle. This combination of the ideological and sensational elements is, from the literary point of view, the most striking feature of Dostoyevsky's "developed manner."

In his interestedness in current social issues, in his "philanthropic" sympathy for the suffering insignificant man, above all in his choice of *milieu*, and in the elaboration of concrete, realistic detail, especially in the speech of his characters, Dostoyevsky belongs to the realistic school. It would, however,

be a mistake to regard his novels as *representations* of Russian life under Alexander II, and that not only because it is in general dangerous to regard even realistic fiction as a representation of life, but because Dostoyevsky is in substance less true to life than any other writer. Aksakov, Turgenev, Goncharov, Tolstoy, did at least honestly try to represent Russian life as they saw it. Dostoyevsky did not. He dealt in spiritual essences, in emanations of his own infinitely fertile spiritual experience. He only gave them the externally realistic garbs of current life and attached them to current facts of Russian life. But the Devils are no more a true picture of the terrorists of the sixties than Gogol's Plyushkin is the true picture of a typical miser. They are exteriorizations of the author's self. Hence their latent "prophetic" and universal significance. They are distinctly on another scale than the Russian life of the time. *The Devils*, though a novel of terroristic conspiracy, is about something quite different from what the actual terroristic movement was about. Dostoyevsky's Russia is no more the real Russia of Alexander II than the characters of *Wuthering Heights* are the real West Riding of the early nineteenth century. They are related to it and symbolical of it, but they belong to another order of existence.

The essential units of Dostoyevsky's novels are the characters, and in this respect he is in the true tradition of Russian novel writing, which regards the novelist as primarily a maker of characters. His characters are at once saturated with metaphysical significance and symbolism, and intensely individual. Dostoyevsky is as great a master as Tolstoy in giving individuality to the people of his creation. But the nature of this individuality is different: Tolstoy's characters are faces, flesh and blood, men and women of our acquaintance, ordinary and unique, like people in real life. Dostoyevsky's are souls, spirits. Even in his lewd and sensual sinners, their carnal self is not so much their body and their nerves as the spiritual essence of their body, of their carnality. Flesh—real, material flesh—is absent from the world of Dostoyevsky, but the idea, the spirit of flesh, is very present, and this is why in that world the spirit can be assailed by the flesh on its own spiritual

ground. These spiritual extracts of the flesh are among the most terrible and tremendous creations of Dostoyevsky—and no one has ever created anything approaching the impure grandeur of old Karamazov.

The portrait gallery of Dostoyevsky is enormous and varied. It is impossible to enumerate the portraits or to give briefly characteristics of them: their vitality, reality, and complexity, and their quantity are too great. They live in every one of the great novels (and in the minor novels too) a strange, morbid, dematerialized life, of terrible human demons, or terribly live ghosts—with their "cracks" (*nadryv*, a word used in a sense not unlike Freud's "complex") and wounds, their spiritual intensity and intense personality, their self-consciousness, their pride (the "proud women" especially) and their knowledge of good and evil—a suffering, tormented, and never-to-be-pacified race. Of the individual novels the most rich in persons is perhaps *The Devils*, which contains at least three creations that come at the top of the list—the terrible and weirdly empty figure of the hero, Stavrogin; the "pure" atheist, Kirilov, perhaps next to *Memoirs from Underground*, the most ultimately profound creation of Dostoyevsky; and the no less terrible "little demon," the mean and strong plotter, flatterer, idolater and murderer, Peter Verkhovensky. These three figures are enough to indicate in their maker a creative force in which he has had no human rivals.

Though influential as a publicist, and always recognized (chiefly, however, on the strength of *Poor Folk* and *The House of Death*) as a very eminent novelist, Dostoyevsky during his lifetime did not get anything like adequate recognition. This is only natural: his mentality was "prophetic" and belonged, historically, not to his own time, but to that preceding the Great Revolution. He was the first and the greatest symptom of the spiritual decomposition of the Russian soul in its highest levels which preceded the final break-up of Imperial Russia.

His literary influence during his lifetime and in the eighties was insignificant and limited to a certain revival of the theme of pity and compassion and to a certain vogue of morbid psychology among a few second-rate novelists. Nor was his

influence in the strictly literary sense important even afterwards. Very few writers can in any strict sense be called his literary progeny. But the influence of Dostoyevsky as a whole and complete phenomenon cannot be exaggerated. The pre-revolutionary generation, especially that born between 1865 and 1880 (that is to say, by a curious coincidence, between the date of the first and last of his great novels), was literally soaked with his ideas and his mentality. Since then the younger generation has become more indifferent to him. Not that his greatness is put to question, not even that he is less read, or less written about: probably more books and articles on Dostoyevsky have appeared within the last five years than during any preceding period of equal length. But our organism has grown immune to his poisons, which we have assimilated and ejected. The most typical attitude of our contemporaries towards Dostoyevsky is to accept him as an absorbingly interesting novelist of adventure. The young men of to-day are not very far from putting him on a level with Dumas, an attitude that testifies of course to a very limited sensitiveness to his essential individuality, but which it would be wrong to lament, for the real Dostoyevsky is food that is easily assimilated only by a profoundly diseased spiritual organism.

3. SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN

The civic and social element so prominent already in the work of Turgenev and of the other novelists of the forties was further emphasized in the work of writers of the reign of Alexander II. The anti-æsthetic movement on the one hand, and the increased possibility of exposing and satirizing existing social and administrative conditions on the other led to the formation of a literary *genre* that stood half-way between fiction and journalism. The first and the most remarkable of these semi-novelists and semi-journalists, as well as the only one who was to win more or less general recognition and to be included in the number of classics, was Michael Evgrafovich

Saltykóv, better known in his own time under the pseudonym of N. Shchedrín.

Born in 1826 of a family of country squires of the Province of Novgorod, Saltykov was educated at the same lyceum where Pushkin had learned. In 1844, on the completion of his studies, he entered the Civil Service. At the same time he came in touch with the progressive circles of the young generation and began writing for the westernizing press. Two stories by him in the style of the "natural school" appeared in 1847–8, over pseudonyms. Their appearance coincided with the turn towards extreme reaction, and Saltykov for having written them was suddenly transferred to the north-eastern city of Vyatka (where Herzen had been transferred fourteen years earlier). In Vyatka Saltykov remained in the Civil Service and in spite of his disgrace even rose to a rather important and responsible post in the administrative board controlling the provincial police. After the accession of Alexander II he was transferred back to Petersburg and in 1858 appointed vice-governor of a province. In 1856 he resumed his literary work. *Provincial Sketches*, a series of satirical sketches of provincial officialdom, appeared in Nekrasov's *Sovremennik* over the pseudonym of N. Shchedrin. In the reforming atmosphere of 1856–61 his writings were received with general approval, and he soon became one of the most universally recognized authors. In 1868 he left the Civil Service to consecrate himself entirely to literature, and, together with Nekrasov, became the editor of *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, which was to replace the *Sovremennik*, suppressed by the authorities in 1866. Henceforward Saltykov became one of the leaders of the radical intelligentsia and retained this position till his death. His review was the most advanced of all the Left organs of the home press. The reaction that followed the assassination of Alexander II was fatal to it; it was suppressed in 1884. In the eighties Saltykov remained a last remnant of the heroic age of reform and progress, universally venerated by all the advanced intelligentsia. He died in 1889.

The greater part of Saltykov's work is a rather nondescript

kind of satirical journalism, for the most part with no narrative skeleton, and intermediate in form betweeen the classical "character" and the modern *feuilleton*. It is intensely topical. Enormously and universally popular though it was in its own time, it has since lost much of its attraction for the simple reason that it satirizes conditions that have long ceased to exist and that much of it has become unintelligible without comment. Such satire can last only if it contains elements of lasting and universal significance, which is not the case with most of Saltykov's writings.

His early works (*Provincial Sketches*, 1856–7; *Pompadours and Pompadouresses*, 1863–73, etc.) are a "smiling" satire, more humorous than scornful, of the vices of the pre-Reform provincial officials. There is little earnestness and positive value in these early satires, and the extreme nihilist Pisarev was not quite in the wrong when he condemned them as irresponsible and uninspired joking in a famous article entitled *Flowers of Innocent Humour* that scandalized the other radicals.

In 1869–70 appeared *The History of a Town*, which sums up the achievement of Saltykov's first period. It is a sort of parody of Russian history, concentrated in the microcosm of a provincial town, whose successive governors are transparent caricatures of Russian sovereigns and ministers, and whose very name is representative of its qualities—Glupov-Silliton.

Saltykov's later work is inspired by a keener sense of indignation and higher feeling for moral values. The satire is directed against the new men of after the Reform: the "enlightened," but essentially unchanged, official; the unrooted, but unregenerate, squire; the grasping and shameless capitalist risen from the people. The intrinsic value of these books (*Gentlemen of Tashkent*, 1869–72; *In the Realm of the Moderate and of the Exact*, 1874–7; *The Sanctuary Mon-Repos*, 1879–80; *Letters to Auntie*, 1881–2, etc.) is greater than that of the earlier ones, but the excessive topicalness of the satire makes them date very distinctly. Besides they are written in a language which Saltykov himself called Æsopic. It is one continuous circumlocution in view of the censorship and de-

mands a constant running commentary. The style, moreover, is deeply rooted in the bad journalese of the period, which goes back to Senkowski's and which invariably produces to-day an impression of painfully elaborate vulgarity.

On a higher level of literary achievement stand the *Fables* (*Skazki*), written in 1880–5, where Saltykov achieved a greater degree of artistic tightness and occasionally (as in the admirable *Konyaga*, where the destinies of the Russian peasant are symbolized in the figure of an old downridden jade) a concentration that almost attains to poetry.

But, after all, Saltykov's place in Russian literature would be only that of an eminent journalist were it not for his masterpiece—his only regular novel—*The Golovlev Family* (1872–6). This one book places him in the very front line of Russian realistic novelists and secures him a permanent place among the national classics. It is a social novel—the natural history of a family of provincial squires, intended to show up the poverty and bestiality of the civilization of the serf-owning class. The reign of brute matter over human lives has never been portrayed with greater force. Spiteful, greedy, selfish, without even any family feeling for each other, without even any satisfaction or any possibility of happiness in their dull and dark souls, the Golovlevs are an unrelieved wilderness of animal humanity. The book is certainly the gloomiest in all Russian literature, all the more gloomy that the effect is attained by the simplest means without any theatrical, melodramatic, or atmospheric effects. Together with Goncharov's *Oblomov* before and Bunin's *Sukhodol* after it, it is the greatest *monumentum odiosum* erected to the memory of the Russian provincial gentry. The most remarkable single figure in the novel is Porfiri Golovlev, nicknamed Iudushka (little Judas), the empty and mechanical hypocrite who cannot stop talking unctuous and meaningless humbug, not for any inner need or outer profit, but because his tongue is in need of constant exercise. It is one of the most terrible visions of ultimately dehumanized humanity ever conceived by an imaginative writer.

In his last years Saltykov undertook a large work of retro-

spective painting, *Old Years in Poshekhonie* (1887–9), a chronicle of the life and surroundings of a family of the middle provincial gentry shortly before the abolition of serfdom. It contains numerous reminiscences of his own childhood. "Tendentious" and unrelievedly gloomy, it abounds in powerful painting, but lacks that concentration and inevitability which *The Golovlev Family* has, and which alone would have raised it above the level of mere "literature with a purpose."

4. THE DECLINE OF THE NOVEL IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

By about 1860 the rank of universally approved authors was filled in, and no new novelist who appeared after that date was able to command general recognition. This was due to two causes that co-operated: the growing intensity of party feeling, which was breaking Russian opinion into more exclusive compartments and categories, and the very evident and distinct decline of creative force among the writers of the younger generation. The only novelist after 1860 who had nothing to fear from a comparison with the men of the forties was Nicholas Leskov (1831–1895). But the exasperated state of party feeling and his inability to fit in with any party precluded his general recognition: he was hooted down by the radical press, and even placed under boycott. The late recognition of Leskov, as well as the fact that his work has features that mark it off distinctly from that of all his contemporaries, has decided me to exclude him from the present volume. He is discussed in my *Contemporary Russian Literature*.

In his early work, however, the reactionary novels *No Way Out* (1864) and *At Daggers Drawn* (1870), Leskov is little more than a typical "tendentious" anti-radical, whose novels are scarcely superior to the common run of reactionary novels that were written in great quantities to satirize the new movement and the young generation in the sixties and seventies. This kind of fiction includes, it is true, such superior, and different, works as Pisemsky's *Troubled Seas* (1863, the first of the lot), Turgenev's *Smoke*, Goncharov's *The Precipice*, and

even Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*. But the typical reactionary novel is on a much lower level of literary significance. It is usually the story of an aristocratic and patriotic hero who fights single-handed, in spite of the insufficient support of the authorities, against Polish intrigue and nihilism. The most typical and popular purveyor of such novels was Boleslaw Markiewicz (1822–1884). Other practitioners in the kind were Victor Klyúshnikov (1841–1892); V. G. Avséyenko (1842–1913), and Vsevolod Krestovsky (1840–1895). The last also wrote the most ambitious and popular attempt in Russian at a melodramatic shocker in the French style (*The Recesses of Petersburg*, 1864–7).

The reactionary novel had its counterpart in the "tendentious" radical novel, which early became equally conventionalized. The most notable of those novels was, no doubt, the first of them, Chernyshevsky's *What to do?* (1864), which had a considerable influence on the formation of the radical youth. Other famous and influential novels were *Signs of the Times* by Daniel Mordovtsev (1830–1905) and *Step by Step* (1865) by Innocent Omulevsky (1835–1883). The most prolific of the radical novelists was A. K. Scheller-Mikhaylov (1838–1900). All these novels are about ideal radical young men and girls victoriously struggling against hostile social conditions. From a literary point of view they are all quite worthless. But they contributed to the formation of the idealistic intelligentsia of the seventies.

In the seventies a third kind of "tendentious" novel was added to these two: the populist (*Narodnik*) novel. It did not represent the individual virtues of the heroes of the educated classes, but the collective virtues of the peasant commune in its struggle against the dark faces of big and small capitalists. The most notable of these populist novelists were N. N. Zlatovrátsky (1845–1911) and P. V. Zasodímsky (1843–1912).

Other novelists continued the traditions of Turgenev and of the men of the forties without exaggerating the "tendentious" element, but emphasized the social at the expense of the artistic element of their realism. Peter Dmitrievich Boborýkin

(1836–1921) tried to rival Turgenev in his sensitiveness to the changes of mood of the Russian intelligentsia, and his innumerable novels form a sort of chronicle of Russian society from the sixties to the twentieth century. A more genuine spirit of the school of Turgenev will be found in the rural novels of Eugene Márkov (1835–1903). Another rural novelist of some importance was Sergey Terpigorev (1841–1895), whose *Impoverishment* (1880) was intended as a vast picture of the social decay of the middle gentry of central Russia after the abolition of serfdom.

Somewhat apart from the other fiction of his time stand the unpretentious and quite enjoyable stories of naval life (1873 and following) of Constantine Stanyukóvich (1844–1903), the only Russian novelist of the sea in the nineteenth century.

Still more apart stand the fairy-tales, published over the name of Kot-Murlyka, by N. P. Wagner (1829–1907), Professor of Zoology at the University of Petersburg, the only writer of the time who attempted to write in a style that was not dominated by the canons of the "natural school."

These canons invaded the historical novel as well as the novel of contemporary life. The romantic and moderately realistic historical novel in the style of Scott breathed its last breath in the operatic *Prince Serebryany* (1863) of Alexey Tolstoy, a work that is considerably below the level of his poetical and even of his dramatic achievement. The new historical novel was a sort of vulgarization of the method used by the other Tolstoy in *War and Peace*. It produced nothing of importance, though it had a considerable vogue. Its principal practitioner was Count Eugène Salias de Tournemir (1840–1908). Other historical novelists, greatly in vogue in the last quarter of the century among the less sophisticated, but as a rule looked down upon by the advanced and the literate, were Grigori Petrovich Danilévsky (1829–1890), who began in the sixties as a more ambitious social novelist of peasant life and whose most popular novel, the sensational *Mirovich*, appeared in 1879; and Vsevolod Soloviev (1849–1903), son of the historian, and brother of the famous philosopher.

All this novel-writing was frankly and obviously derivative and second-rate. In so far as the younger generation (apart from Leskov) produced anything if not quite first-class at least genuine, it all came from a group of young men of plebeian origin and radical convictions, who are somewhat loosely grouped by literary historians as the "plebeian novelists of the sixties" (*belletristy raznochintsy*).

5. THE "PLEBEIAN" NOVELISTS

The most notable of the plebeian novelists was Nikolay Gerasimovich Pomyalóvsky (1835–1863). He was the son of a deacon of a Petersburg suburb and was educated at a clerical seminary which left in him, as was usual, none but the gloomiest impressions. His subsequent life was one continuous struggle for existence, which led him, as it did so many others of his time and class, to an early surrender to drink. He died at the age of twenty-eight, after a particularly acute access of delirium tremens. All his work was done in the last three years of his life. His most famous book, and the one that made his reputation, was *Seminary Sketches* (*Ocherki Bursey*, 1862–3), in which by the mere sober and matter-of-fact accumulation of realistic detail he succeeded in producing an impression of almost infernal horror. In *Bourgeois Happiness* and in its sequel, *Molotov* (1861), Pomyalovsky drew the character of a man of the young generation. He did not idealize his hero, nor did he even represent him as an idealist, but as a strong man intent on finding for himself a place in life. When Pomyalovsky died, he was working at a vast social novel, *Brother and Sister*, picturing the life of a family of small Petersburg townspeople. The fragments that remain make us bitterly regret the loss of a novelist of vast outlook, original imagination, and powerful grasp of reality. His unsweetened and unidealized, but by no means flat, realism, his careful avoidance of everything poetical and rhetorical, and his strong sense of the grim poetry of ugliness, were an individual and new note in the orchestra of Russian realism. There was also in Pomyalovsky a cement of practical sense that is unusual in a Russian

intellectual and that was only transiently a feature of the first generation of plebeian intellectuals that came after the generation of the forties.

The same anti-romanticism and anti-æstheticism, a natural reaction against the idealism of the forties, produced in the sixties an attitude towards the Russian peasant that was opposed to the sentimental philanthropism of the preceding age. It did not emphasize the human values that can be discovered in the peasant, but the brutishness to which he had been reduced by centuries of oppression and ignorance. This attitude, with a touch of cynical flippancy, is apparent in the witty sketches and dialogues of Nicholas Uspénsky (1837–1889; a first cousin of the more important Gleb Uspensky, of whom presently), which appeared in 1861 and were greeted by Chernyshevsky as the dawn of a new and more sensible attitude to the people than that of the sentimental "philanthropists." The same attitude is apparent in a less trivial form in the work of Vasili Alexeyevich Sleptsóv (1836–1878), one of the most characteristic figures of the sixties. A nobleman and an exceedingly handsome man, Sleptsov had a powerful attraction for the other sex. He put into practice the ideals of free love to which his generation was devoted. To the indignation of the radicals he was transparently lampooned by Leskov in the reactionary novel *No Way Out*. As a writer Sleptsov is particularly remarkable for his brilliant command of realistic dialogue. The dialogue of his peasants, often intensely comical, preserves all the spoken intonations and all dialectal peculiarities and has the merit of a phonographic record without forfeiting the workmanlike tensity of genuine art. Sleptsov's most ambitious work, *Hard Times* (1865), is a satirical picture of the liberal society of the sixties.

The same unsentimental attitude to the peasants, but raised to a more earnestly tragic power, inspires the work of Fedor Mikhaylovich Reshétnikov (1841–1871), whose life story is almost identical with Pomyalovsky's except that he was born in the far-off province of Perm and had to surmount still greater difficulties in his struggle for a place in life. His story, portraying the life of the Finnish Permyaks of his native

province, *The People of Podlipnoe* (1864), produced a tremendous impression by its ruthless representation of the peasants (the critics overlooked the fact that they were not Russian) as unmitigated, hopeless, downtrodden, and miserable brutes. Written with no literary pretension, in a detailed and calm, realistic manner, the story produced its effect by the mere choice and accumulation of detail, which distilled an atmosphere of impenetrable horror. The story was one of those that most powerfully promoted the movement of the "conscience-stricken nobles," by rousing in them a sense of social guilt for the state the people had been reduced to.

The biography of Alexander Ivanovich Lévitov (1835–1877) is again almost the same story over again as those of Pomyalovsky and of Reshetnikov. He was a native of south central Russia (Tambov) and spent most of his life in wandering over the vast expanses of Russia. His work is more lyrical and subjective than that of the preceding writers. It is almost entirely free from narrative skeleton. Though formless and diffuse, it is full of a piercing poetical sadness akin to that of the Russian folk-song. It is concerned chiefly with the homeless life of tramps and pilgrims. Levitov stands out among his contemporaries for the romantic character of his work, which combines a poignantly lyrical note with a bitter irony in a way that is reminiscent of Heine's.

A very notable figure in the history of the Russian intelligentsia is Gleb Ivanovich Uspénsky. He was born in Tula in 1840 of a family of small provincial clerks. He began his literary career in 1866, with a series of sketches of life in the suburbs of his native city of Tula, *Manners of Rasteryaeva Street*, where he displayed an unmistakable gift of humour and human sympathy, as well as a sober and unbiassed vision of life. But his most characteristic and influential writings belong to the end of the seventies and to the early eighties, when after several years in the country he gave a series of semi-journalistic, semi-imaginative sketches of peasant life, the most important of which is *The Power of the Soil* (1882). They are marked by the same gifts of humour and intense humanity, of sober, unobscured vision. They reflected his disillusionment

in the populist conception of the Russian peasant as an ideal communist. Appearing as they did in Saltykov's radical review side by side with Zlatovratsky's idealizations of the peasant commune, they contributed powerfully to the break-down of dogmatic populism. But Gleb Uspensky is not only interesting as a student of peasant life. He is in general one of the most representative and characteristic figures of the best type of Russian intellectual. Possessed of a morbidly developed moral sensitiveness, he lived the conflicts and the tragedies of the Russian radical mind with extraordinary intensity. The tragic romance of the Russian intellectual with the Russian people was played out in his soul as in a microcosm. Unfortunately his writings, diffuse and intensely topical, are obsolete even more than Saltykov's and few except students of the history of the Russian intelligentsia read them nowadays. In the early nineties Gleb Uspensky became a victim to mental illness, which lasted till his death, in 1902. It took the form of a morbid disintegration of personality. He felt himself divided into two beings, one of which he designated by his Christian name, Gleb; the other by his patronymic, Ivanovich. Gleb was the embodiment of all that was good, Ivanovich of all that was evil in Uspensky, an identification characteristic of the eminently anti-traditional and rootless nature of the Russian radical intelligentsia.

In the end of the seventies another remarkable semi-journalist was Andrew Novodvórsky (1853–1882), who wrote under the pseudonym of A. Osipovich. He took part in the revolutionary movement, and his stories are, as it were, fragments from the diary of an intellectual who was unable to identify himself whole-heartedly with what he thought the one important thing—revolutionary propaganda. His first and best-known story, *An Episode from the Life of Neither-Crow-nor-Peacock* (1877), portrays the vacillations and pusillanimities of an intellectual who has thrown in his lot with the active revolutionaries, but is unable to live up to his part. The style of Novodvorsky is personal and full of a fine irony and incisive humour. It has been compared to Heine's. He was alone in his generation to play with the plot and with the

narrative illusion in the manner of Sterne. The obscurities and innuendos impressed on him by the presence of the Censorship contributed to enhance the whimsical and capricious character of his delightfully personal prose.

It is particularly agreeable for me to end this volume with the name of Nicholas Afanasievich Kushchévsky, one of the most delightful and least recognized of Russian writers. His biography is similar to those of Pomyalovsky, of Reshetnikov, and of Levitov, and of numerous more obscure plebeian writers. Born in 1847 in Siberia, he came to Petersburg in the end of the sixties in search of literary employment, but met with unsurmountable difficulties and succumbed to disease, destitution, and drink. While he lay convalescent in a municipal hospital, he succeeded in writing his one important work, the novel *Nicholas Negorev, or The Happy Russian.* It appeared in Saltykov's and Nekrasov's magazine in 1871 and in book form in 1872, and had a considerable success among the radical public. But his later work did not bear out the promise of that book and is hardly above the level of average journalism. After five more years of hopeless struggle against starvation, undermined by drink and consumption, Kushchevsky died in 1876.

Nicholas Negorev is not, from the formal point of view, as original as the writings of Pomyalovsky or Uspensky. It assumes the more or less orthodox form of a chronicled life, the greater part of which is occupied by the childhood and boyhood of the hero. This hero, in whose person the narrative is conducted, is a remarkable type of moderately ambitious, moderately clever, moderately cowardly, moderately priggish boy who grows up to be a successful, satisfied, and selfish bureaucrat. But it is not the central figure, however finely drawn, that makes the unique charm of the book. The other characters, Nicholas's reckless, foolish, and generous brother Andrew, their sister Liza, the extraordinary crank and fanatic, Overin, the hero's *fiancée*, Sophie Vasilievna, are all figures endowed with a convincing liveness that challenges comparison with *War and Peace.* Kushchevsky's delicacy of touch is unique in Russian literature. For liveliness and lightness of humour the

book has no equals. While on a higher level of seriousness, the character of the fanatic Overin, with his succession of dead-serious and dangerously earnest fads while a schoolboy and his propagandist activities when grown up, and the scene of the death of Sophie Vasilievna belong to the greatest achievement of Russian fiction. From the historical point of view the novel offers an unsurpassed picture of the change that transformed the Russia of Nicholas I into the almost anarchic Russia of the sixties.

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II. FRENCH AND GERMAN

Many Russian works that are not available in English exist in good French or German translations. Of the French translations those published by Bossard and by *Les Éditions de la Pléiade* are particularly reliable. German translations are numerous and, in the case of poetry, much superior as a rule to those in English or French. Wolfgang Groeger and Reinhold von Walter have de-

served reputation as particularly good translators of Russian into German verse. For a bibliography of German translations and works on Russian literature see *Geschichte der Russischen Literatur,* by Arthur Luther (Leipsic: *Bibliographisches Institut,* 1924; with numerous and excellent illustrations).

III. RUSSIAN

There is no standard history of Russian literature in Russian. All the existing ones are either hopelessly obsolete, or frankly second-hand compilations.

For the ancient period the best surveys are those of Istrin, Keltuyala, and Vladimirov. For the pre-Pushkin period the old (and in its time excellent) history of Galakhov and the modern text-book of Sipovsky are to be recommended. An excellent monograph of the poets of the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is *Russkaya Lirika,* by I. N. Rozanov (1914). The four-volume history of Pypin can hardly be regarded as a *literary* history; besides it has a strong anti-national bias. However, the chapters on Old Russian fiction and on the relations of literature and folk-lore are valuable. The historical "Chrestomathies" of Sipovsky, Savodnik, and Brodsky, are perhaps the best guides to early Russian literature (up to Pushkin).

For the nineteenth century the Encyclopædia of Brockhaus-Efron is very valuable. But the dearth of a reliable general history is still more obvious. Skabichevsky's survey of 1848–93 contains a lot of, chiefly, biographical information, but is almost comically biassed. The works of Andreyevich and Ivanov-Razumnik are frankly "constructive," and distinctly dangerous really, except to the completely initiated. There is a vast mass of valuable monographs and essays on individual writers and periods, to extract which every serious student will have to have constant recourse to the bibliographical manuals of Mezier, Peretts (*Kratkiy Ocherk Metodologii,* Petersburg, 1922), Piksanov (*Dva Veka Russkoy Literatury,* 2nd ed., 1925), and Vladislavlev (*Russkie Pisateli, XIX–XX vekov* 4th ed., 1924). It goes without saying that in the present conditions of the Russian book market numerous books are out of print and may be obtained only in public libraries.

Within the last years a new school of literary historians, known as the "Formalists," have come up and are doing much to study

Russian literature from a more purely literary point of view than has hitherto been the case. The works of Zhirmunsky (on *Byron and Pushkin*), of Eichenbaum (on *Lermontov* and on *The Young Tolstoy*), of Tynyanov, of Victor Vinogradov (on *Gogol* and *Dostoevsky*) have been important contributions to knowledge.

The present author has compiled an anthology of Russian poetry from Lomonosov to our own times (*Russkaya Lirika,* Paris, 1924).

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